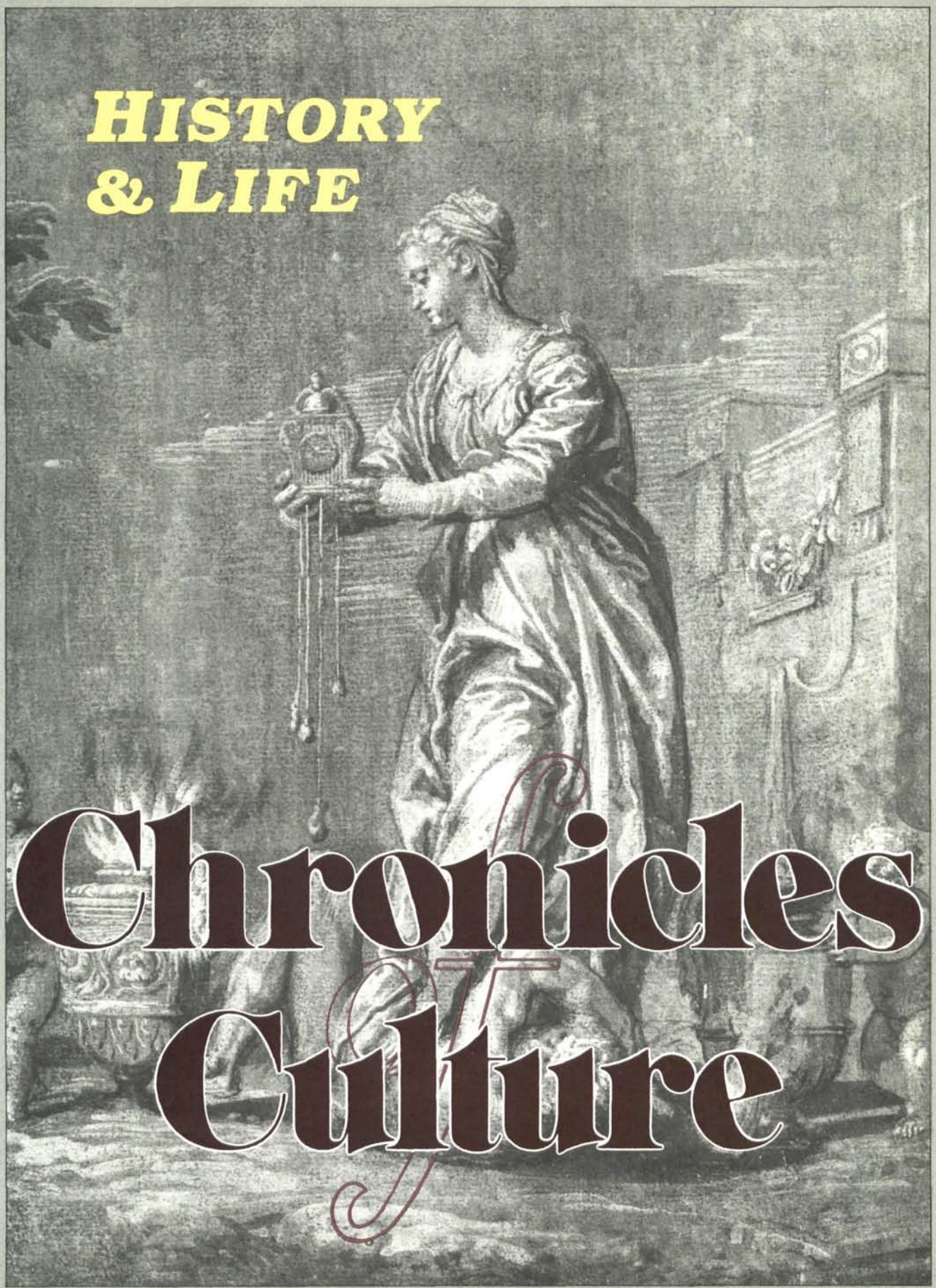
HISTORY & LIFE



Chronicles of Culture

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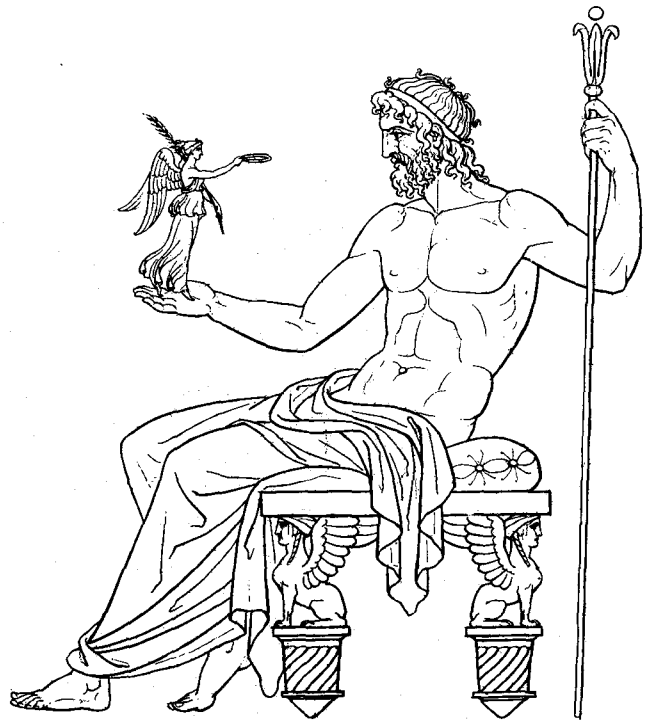
COMMENT

The 19th century was the heroic age of the historian. The triumph of the historical method, according to one period source, had "revolutionized not only the sciences of law, mythology and language, of anthropology and sociology, but it has forced its way even into the domain of philosophy and natural science." The concentration on primary records, the use of the comparative mode, the commitment to scientific objectivity and the elaborate flowering of "the gift of historical thinking"—a methodology systematized with near-religious purpose by the German Leopold von Ranke—were the elements of this intellectual credo. Exhibiting that peculiar form of imperialism found among the academic illuminati, the discipline's acolytes soon extended their claims far beyond scholastic circles. "All our hopes of the future," wrote one practitioner of the new science, "depend on a sound understanding of the past."

Amidst the nations of Anglo-Saxon heritage, the classical liberal interpretation of history generally held sway. Lord Acton, who had transplanted "the German method" across the Channel, gave this approach its most confident exegesis. For him, the history of the world since 1500 was the narrative of "the universal spirit of investigation and discovery," which had overcome recurring efforts at reaction and had finally prevailed during "the reign of general ideas" of the latter 1700's. "The unexpected truth, stranger than fiction," he stated, was that the Revolution of Sieyès "was not the ruin but the renovation of history." Knowledge of the past, Acton declared with aplomb, was always "the safest and surest emancipation."

In contrast to old Tory philosophers such as Edmund Burke, however, Acton insisted that such a temporal faith was not the enemy of true religion. "[T]his constancy of progress . . . in the direction of organized and assured freedom," he wrote, "is the characteristic fact of Modern History, and its tribute to the theory of Providence." Acton believed that the wisdom of Divine rule appeared in "the improvement of the world" and in the steady advance toward "achieved liberty." He insisted that where there existed "a fair level of general morality, education, courage and self-restraint," where human judgments were delivered by canons of "evident morality" and where a society's intellectual custodians pledged "never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude," the necessary prerequisites for freedom and progress were secured.

A contemporary late 19th-century figure, however, saw the weakness inherent in this otherwise compelling explication of the past and future, and he came to contemplate the latter with dread. Jakob Burckhardt, writing in the little Swiss city of Basel, diagnosed an amoral aspect of modern liberalism that would slowly erode the "evident morality" and corrupt "the standard of rectitude" which Acton, perforce, assumed to be givens. Drawing on the theories of Rousseau, Burckhardt noted that European democrats seeking equality and human perfection had breached those values—the inner acceptance of authority, the respect for tradition, the readiness to restrain individual appetites for the common good—which alone allowed democracy to work. The "terrible intellectual nullity" of radicalism, he stressed, had left laws and even constitutions vulnerable to any demagogue who might claim a new "right of man." As a result, all matters in the democratic age depended on the whims and manipulations of public opinion. "Anything is possible in Europe since the Paris Commune [of 1871]," Burckhardt wrote, "chiefly because there are everywhere good, splendid liberal people *who do not quite know the boundaries of right and wrong* and where the duty of resistance and defense begins. It is these men who open the doors and level the paths for the terrible masses everywhere." [Emphasis added]



Looking toward the coming century, Burckhardt saw the probable results: the sacrifice of liberty to standardization and a bogus equality; a gradual lowering in the caliber of political leadership; pacifist rhetoric among democrats who were simultaneously building military despotisms; increasing dependence by the masses on the state; the rise to authority of "criminal cliques" that would "completely ignore law, prosperity, profitable labor and industry"; and a populace that would "no longer believe in principles but will, periodically, . . . [believe] in saviours." In this age, Burckhardt suggested, "liberal Protestantism" would evaporate and the reformed pastors would "scatter like dust as soon as people fall into real distress." Only the conservative churches, he suspected, would offer any resistance to the coming onslaught of the totalitarians.

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And so the world lurched ahead. The cultural tremor brought on by the Great War and the rise to power of Bolshevism, fascism and nazism shattered the faith held by liberal historians that human progress was not only inevitable but also the theme which gave order to the past. The result has been sixty years of muddled scholasticism and the degeneration of the West's historical consciousness to the level of a John Jakes novel. Clio—the mythical goddess of history and the queen of the disciplines during the bourgeois age of progress—has become this century's whore. "Scientific socialism" and "scientific racism," the great historicist heresies of Western civilization, turned the past into a justification for the extermination of millions in the pursuit of "necessity" and human perfection. More subtly, "revisionist" historians in the United States, beginning with Charles Beard and running through William A. Williams, Gabriel Kolko and other devotees of the art during the debunking 1960's and 70's, transformed historical writing into an ideological club with which to bludgeon the American Experiment.

Even the one fresh breeze in historical method which rose in our century, that school of interpretation formed around the French journal *Annales*, has been regularly twisted into a lascivious instrument. At their best, *Annalists* such as Fernand Brandel, Philippe Ariès and Pierre Goubert have offered an exhaustive vision of the density of past European social and economic life. Characteristically, though, Ariès's near-classic *Centuries of Childhood* descends by its end into a mere tract defiling the bourgeois family, including the author's mildly incriminating apologia for such "prebourgeois" practices as the sexual abuse of small children. Similarly, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's widely praised history of a 13th-century heretical French village, *Montaillou,* owes its popularity in large part to a voyeurish fascination with the sex lives of peasants and the book's meticulous, admiring dissection of an alternative (read "nonbourgeois") lifestyle. Despite their flashes of brilliance, the *Annalists* too often provide little more than colorful pictures devoid of moral content. Their work is thus a near-perfect reflection of the West's contemporaneous loss of identity and moral purpose and, ultimately, a betrayal of historical consciousness itself.

In our day, the task facing those historians still loyal to the Western inheritance is to reconcile a sense of history as progress, born out of a hard-won cultural balance between order and liberty, with unblindered recognition of the evil loose in the world that threatens that balance each step of the way. The aloof, priestlike pose which Ranke cherished ("You are in the first place a Christian," the German mentor once wrote to a clerical follower. "I am in the first place a historian. There is a gulf between us.") seems to be a luxury the West can no longer afford. Instead, with Schopenhauer, modern scholars need to reassert that historical-mindedness is what distinguishes the civilized man from the barbarian; and, with Froude, affirm that the eternal truths and the right and wrong of things exist independent of individual thoughts and wishes, being inherent in the very nature of man and the world.

There are contemporary works which approach these standards. Stanley Jaki's masterful *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* is a richly documented analysis of the Western scientific revolution that, through its unfeigned interpretation of human motives, supersedes the secularist treatments that have long dominated and distorted the history of science. Edward Shorter's 1976 study, *The Making of the Modern Family,* synthesizes the wealth of social, economic and demographic data on the Western family generated by the *Annales* school over the past fifty years and ultimately affirms on the merits of evidence the unfabled moral and material progress that marked the oft-derided 19th century.

The greatness of an epoch or cause, Burckhardt once suggested, depends on the quota of those men and women capable of making sacrifices in its behalf. The restoration of moral vision and historical-mindedness in our unsettled age will exact such a measure of courage. And only then will our intuition of the past be reunited with the enduring truths that alone provide human life with dignity and purpose.

—Allan Carlson

Dr. Carlson is editor of Persuasion At Work.

Social Register

Finally! We're all done with the traumas of a violated personality! No more spiritual torment or psychological turmoil caused by a refashioned nose, adjusted abdomen, uplifted eyelids. Down with the artificiality of smoothed-out wrinkles! Victimized socialites from sea to shining sea, from the lofts of Soho to the boutiques of Rodeo Drive, may emit a tender sigh of victory as the *Women's Wear Daily* crowd celebrates its finest hour. According to a *New York* magazine ad:

> Now You Can Have Full Natural Breasts in Only One Day

What a magnificant triumph of science! One Dr. Gilbert Eiseman, "board certified plastic surgeon," has put naturalness—the ultimate luxury —up for sale. He "has created and perfected the transaxillary procedure, the ultimate and most highly refined procedure for creating the full, natural, beautiful breast." Which means that he is not only a cosmetician but also a creator. What hosannas in Studio 54! □

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Timeless Apostasy Chic

Gay Wilson Allen: *Waldo Emerson, A Biography;* Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Otto J. Scott

Several commentators have claimed that Gay Wilson Allen has written the first full biography of Emerson in thirty years. That is untrue—Edward Wagenecht published a biography of Emerson in 1974; Joel Porte issued another in 1979. Both these volumes are still drifting through remainder outlets. Beyond that, a visit to the University of California's central library in La Jolla revealed: fourteen fat volumes of Emerson's *Letters;* forty-six even glossier volumes of his *Journals,* plus a summary volume of the same stupendous *Journals;* four full shelves of miscellaneous volumes devoted to the Sage of Concord; forty-five volumes of the *Emerson Society Quarterly*. All this was seen, mind you, in only a cursory glance toward the great mounds of reverence heaped at the feet of the Sage. It would seem that a repetition of what is known about Emerson would be redundant beyond belief, that no contemporary biographer would dare to issue yet another volume unless he had unearthed or perceived something the others missed. Dr. Allen says as much himself in his preface. He makes much of the fact that Emerson chose to be called Waldo by his friends, a point I, too, noted some years back. He, furthermore, claims that Ralph L. Rusk's biography of Emerson is "weak on the intimate, personal life and in literary interpretation." I did not find it so. In fact, Dr. Allen's version is basically little different from Dr. Rusk's. Dr. Rusk was a more polished writer and provided a work that, as Dr. Allen admits, set the standard for thirty years. To a large extent that standard remains aloft. But it seems time for some scholar to shake off the misplaced veneration and take a closer look at Emerson. Such an examination is long overdue: the general detail of Emerson's life is so well-known as to be commonplace. Despite Dr. Allen's illusion that he is telling the world something new (having unearthed more Emerson letters), we learn little that is new and miss much that is old.

What we need is a more accurate placement of Emerson's position in the larger scheme of the world at that time. That world was in the throes of bitter argument over Christianity. It was thrashing about in shallow water, disturbed with waves created by the passage of various European vessels. This was not a new situation; such upheavals had led Emerson's forebears to the Puritan colony of Massachusetts. The Puritans, however, were intellectuals who knew precisely what they believed and what they refused to accept. They were aware that Pascal had taken atheists seriously and credited atheism as a religious position. Therefore the Puritans denied admission to individuals of that contrary faith. Perry Miller of Harvard dammed a long river of drivel about the Puritans by resurrecting their literary and philosophical works, proving that they were formidable scholars and sophisticated Christians. Their problem regarding atheists is similar to the challenge presented to a free society today by communists. To allow the enemies of freedom to destroy freedom was a trap into which the Puritans refused to fall. That has since been termed intolerance, but at least Massachusetts survived. In time, of course, it succumbed to prosperity and the eroding effect of generations of ease and comfort. By the time young Emerson, heir to seven generations of ministers, came along, the tides of atheism were running strong in Europe and being felt in New England. In Emerson's youth these trends seemed novel. The French Revolution had proven the vulnerability of the Church, and, after Napoleon's defeat, anticlerical arguments once again grew fashionable. When Emerson was twenty-one years old, in 1824, the ideas of the Enlightenment were, once again, floating free.

Emerson's mentor was Dr. William Ellery Channing, a figure whom Dr. Allen treats only in passing—a significant error, one that betrays a lack of understanding of the period. Dr. Channing was a formidable figure in Boston who had moved smoothly from Calvinism to the distinctly anti-Christian Unitarian position, acquiring along the way some literary success. He undertook to review and criticize Milton and was hailed throughout England by various *avant* Unitarians as a perfect exemplar of America. Channing's literary fame was, in fact, the precursor of Emerson's. To observe that Emerson imitated Channing in both theology and literature is to state the obvious. Yet Dr. Allen does not refer to it. Instead, he describes Emerson's Aunt Mary—who did understand the religious and theological issues of her time—as an "eccentric." In reality, Emerson's Aunt Mary not only watched

Mr. Scott is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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her nephew drift, but also left a running chorus of comment and analysis on his course which is more penetrating than anything done by secular scholars since then.

Channing charted the Unitarian course for the Transcendentalists, but he was not Emerson's only exemplar. There is hardly a sentence of Emerson's that does not echo a previous thought, and Dr. Allen deserves credit for recognizing this much. On the other hand, he makes a deep obeisance to Emerson's character —a subject for which a deeper examination is needed. The most important aspect of the Emerson family, after all, was its poverty during Emerson's childhood, youth and early manhood. His father had died, and the widow and children lived off genteel charity. It was from this situation, with his mother operating a boarding house, that Emerson made a favorable marriage to a sickly young heiress. Before they were wed he insisted on a will, giving rise to suspicion, but Emerson rose above it. His bride died before she was twenty-one. Since his wife's family had been heavily stricken by tuberculosis, it is difficult to believe that he did not anticipate her death and equally difficult to believe that he would have married her had she been poor. It was a period when land, houses, carriages, horses, incomes were far more important than they are today, for there was no governmental Santa Claus in the wings. One could, literally, starve to death. Emerson fought hard for his young wife's estate. Only after he won did he discover that he had doubts about the divinity of Jesus and the significance of Communion. Buttressed by his new income, he left the Second Church of Boston. It would be inaccurate to say that Emerson had not expressed dissent with various Christian tenets before he received his inheritance, but he found the ministry supportable before, and insupportable after. Let us grant that Emerson was young, and that he did not remarry soon, or hastily. He was a man of austere and controlled habits, and the inheritance did not go to his head; he did not dissipate or sow wild oats. He lent money to his brothers; he helped his mother.

He went to England and met Carlyle, whom he later helped—and who helped him. That is the nature of writers who admire one another's work; no sin in that. He met persons of intellect and influence at a time when London was the center of the English-speaking world. He began his praises of the English, which contributed to his literary success.

Through the 1840's and 1850's Emerson turned out small, precious works, with ideas taken largely from Persian poets and Platonic philosophy, to the quiet applause of a small but steadily more influential coterie. There is a contemporary myth to the effect that the Transcendentalists, of which Emerson was a prototype, were more ethical than religious in their inclinations, but this does not hold up. They were, after all, mainly clergymen, not simply members of congregations. Emerson was a minister. He was known, all his life, as the Reverend. So were the majority of his colleagues, from Hedges to Higginson, Channing to Parker. For reasons that do not bear analysis, American historians and literati have persistently refused to mention these clerical facts of life. That abolitionism was largely a ministerial movement is one of the best-hidden secrets of American history.* The Transcendentalists were religious dissenters, and Channing and Emerson were among their leaders.

Emerson went beyond Channing in denying the divinity of Jesus, and sank below other commentators in expressing his disgust at the reverence accorded to the "person" of Jesus. His position was as anti-Christian as is possible to assume. He turned, however, a benign eye toward Hinduism, with its multiple gods, toward Buddhism, with its multiple hells, toward Persian poets of a vanished epoch and toward the elite mischief of Plato. His Platonism was typical of his times: similar illusions were coursing through Britain and Germany, where the Higher Criticism held that Troy had never existed, that the Bible was all myth and superstition, that Jesus never lived, that whatever relics remained of Attic Greece and Imperial Rome were, in some fashion, holy and worthy of worship. Emerson was a part of a trend, enough of a Victorian to believe that he should have beliefs. There was, therefore, a clerical cadence to Emerson's prose which made it especially effective when it was freshly delivered. Emerson was the spokesman for what one commentator called the American Hegelians, devotees of Higher Criticism, searchers for a faith among the relics and ruins of Asia and Greece, who turned to politics for salvation. Of course, Emerson did not move all the way all at once. He read Persian poets and Greek philosophy in translation and taught himself to read German. He took his Hegel from Carlyle and his ideas wherever he could find them. Dr. Allen mentions some of these ideas, but his treatment is light. The growing anti-industrialism of Transcendentalism never seems to attract his attention. In fact, he quotes Emerson on railroads in order to give just the opposite impression. Dr. Allen cites the essay on *Self-Reliance* at great length, but to Emerson self-reliance did not include the entrepreneur and was not intended to apply to in-

"The Father of Us All" [The title of a review of *Waldo Emerson*]
—Alfred Kazin
New York Review of Books

". . . this orphic saint . . ."
—*Time*

*In my own work on the lunatic fringe of the abolitionists *(The Secret Six)*, the New York Times Book Company editors rigorously excised every "Rev." attached to every name in the ms. I restored the titles and the editors removed them again without notice, thus maintaining the secular myth of abolitionism.

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dustry.

The Transcendentalists moved into politics during the Mexican War. Like their imitators during the 1960's, the Transcendentalists saw racist motives in the American war against Mexico, but not in Mexican hatred of Americans. The Transcendentalists spoke openly against the war and heaped scorn upon those who fought. One of the politicians attracted to the movement was Lincoln, whose speeches on the issue in the House of Representatives are interesting. Dr. Allen does not dwell on such events; he is interested only in the literary Emerson, disconnected from larger issues.

By 1850, the Mexican War was over, and gold had been found in California. The gold rush had a great impact; it introduced the get-rich-overnight syndrome and helped create a highly publicized, essentially deceptive myth about our society. Thoreau, Emerson's devoted acolyte, called it "The world's raffle. It makes," he said, "God a moneyed gentleman who throws coins in the dust to see men grovel. . . ." He considered it an evil that some men could strike it rich. His attitude is common today but was unknown to earlier periods, when envy of the good fortune of others was held to be too base an attitude for open expression. But the gold rush was not as revealing of Emerson's character as the Compromise of 1850. That settlement of the slavery issue, which forbade the expansion of slavery and marked the first official recognition that it was a finite, limited system, was greeted at Concord as a betrayal. Emerson, a one-time admirer of Webster, turned into an acid and venomous critic. Dr. Allen regards his fury with equanimity, but it marked a sharp turn away from tolerance and civility in Emerson's life. He proceeded, from 1850 onward, to encourage the most radical and violent participants in the controversy, who eventually became known to historians as the Committee of Six. Dr. Allen pretends not to have heard of them.

Two of the Six were clergymen, two were businessmen, one was the teacher of the Emerson children, one was a physician. It was this group—consisting entirely of friends and associates of Emerson and Thoreau—which financed, armed and encouraged the infamous John Brown, whom Dr. Allen terms "the martyr." Brown, as historian James Malin has made clear, committed a series of atrocities in Kansas, beginning with the massacre of five innocent settlers. Dr. Allen says that Brown did this "because they were pro-slavery men." The record does not prove that; the victims were poor farmers who had never owned slaves; their only offense was to be from the South and to live near Brown. After that massacre, Brown became a tool of the Six, who relished and rejoiced in his crimes. Brown stole cattle and goods, threatened settlers, was "an embezzler, a murderer, cattle thief and liar." Emerson decided, in the late 1850's, that Brown was a hero. Of the Kansas struggles he said, "All the right is on one side."

Dr. Allen does not tell the reader that in his early thirties Emerson believed "that the Negro was innately inferior to the white man, and that slavery was his natural lot. It was not until 1844 that Emerson publicly repudiated this belief upon making 'the proud discovery that the black race can contend with the white.' "* In 1850 Emerson declared that slaveowners had no rights within Massachusetts. That was, publicly, his bravest position.

But both Emerson and Thoreau believed that John Brown, being guided by a "higher law," was right in his violent approach. In 1857 Brown visited Concord, was taken to lunch at the Thoreau home, and later was invited to be Emerson's houseguest. A few days later Brown spoke at the Concord Town Hall, and Emerson expressed great pleasure in the hero's remarks. Later he took up a collection, since the Captain was always short of cash. When Brown finally revealed his colors at Harper's Ferry in 1859, Emerson thought the hero had "lost his head." But he did not repudiate a crime that began with the murder of a free black baggagemaster and led to the deaths of many more innocents. In fact, Emerson spoke of Brown as a saint and said that he would "make the gallows as glorious as the cross." This parallel with Jesus shocked Hawthorne into a new understanding of the extent of Emerson's departure from Christianity.

The Emerson cult began in earnest after the Civil War. The abolitionists, once the South had been goaded into leveling the first blow, suddenly became perfervid patriots—with Emerson at their head, although he was not so carried away as to want his own son to fight. Where they had feared arrest and imprisonment for treason earlier, the Secret

*Gilman Ostrander, "Emerson, Thoreau and John Brown," *The Mississippi Historical Review,* March 1953.

Idealism in America

Professor Alan Wolfe, a *gauchiste* publicist for *The Nation*—the journal for the wealthy who believe in socialism (of all hues) as the best weapon against poverty—on Professor Samuel Huntington's latest book:

> Not for Huntington the use of intelligence to improve the lot of mankind.

God save us from those who would use intelligence to improve the lot of mankind. It would be interesting to hear the expletive that an average Pole, Vietnamese, etc. might use to comment on Professor Wolfe's idealism. □

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Six were now transformed into heroes. Emerson thought Grant's terms at Appomattox were too lenient; he wanted to see the South punished.

After the war Emerson, Thoreau and most of the Transcendentalists became the subjects of an outpouring of mawkish and adulatory books, reminiscences and recollections. The Sage, however, fell victim to aphasia and slipped into a sad decline. On this topic, as on the subjects of the death of Emerson's first wife and eldest son, Dr. Allen provides an excellent and humane account. But he seems to record the tragedy of Emerson's loss of perception and abandonment of principle without understanding it. In fact, he apparently shares the blindness of his subject. For the man who rejoiced in the tragedy of the Civil War had, in effect, abandoned the reason he so proudly extolled. No other nation, after all, had to resort to violence to solve so political an issue. The Russians, the Portuguese, the French, the Mexicans, the Spanish, the English—all of them settled their slavery issues with a stroke of a pen. Only Americans lost sight of rationality, and even here the catastrophe might well have been averted, had not the abolitionists made a religious issue of the matter, had Brown's murders not been condoned by the North, and if the Southerners had not been led to believe that they would be massacred to the last man. Emerson's role in these events was not small. He and his colleagues carped at Lincoln throughout the President's terms and hailed the Reconstruction.

In 1883, a year after Emerson's death, David N. Utter, a Unitarian clergyman, called attention to the true nature of John Brown. That set off a great intra-Unitarian controversy, for by then this flock had, said James Malin, "devoted more attention to the worship of Emerson than to God." Despite a mountain of evidence against Brown, the issue was fairly well papered over, together with the fallible nature of Emerson and the abolitionists. Yet the truth kept seeping through the cracks. By 1900 it was generally agreed that the abolitionists had helped create catastrophe and that Emerson was not a serious thinker.

Then the pendulum swung back. The great expurgation of Christianity's contributions to the West, and to the United States, was gradually successful. The history texts were de-Christianized, and the "New England religion" which Emerson held aloft was made respectable. Dr. Allen believes that Emerson "anticipated," in an intellectual sense, the birth of Christian Science. I agree. There are other movements of which that might also be said. Little of the essence of this, however, can be learned from reading Dr. Allen; his hints are scattered and few. The overall work glitters and gleams, is all white and shiny—and repeats every hoary old myth, every hackneyed old comment ever made about Emerson. To discover the real Reverend the reader will have to outlive the abolitionist-worshipers who have, in our time, repeated all the propaganda of the 1850's, updated to apply to the racist politics, anti-Christianity and antigovernmental clamor of today. □

The Ethos of Bus-Terminal Rest Rooms

Robert Stone: *A Flag for Sunrise;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

by Stephen L. Tanner

It is unwise to underestimate the impact upon our nation of the Vietnam War and the related cultural phenomena of the 60's—the drugs, music, radical politics and disaffected counterculture. But there may be an even greater danger in overestimating it. *A Flag for Sunrise* manifests such a danger.

In an interview concerning the writing of this novel, Robert Stone said, "To me it seemed that with the war, the drug explosion, the music, all the wild things, whatever you want to call it, the world was so different from the way it was before the war. It was almost like living in the aftermath of a revolution. This is a different kind of country." He had witnessed this "revolution" in a first-hand way. He was involved in the psychedelic drug and counterculture experience in California during the early 60's; in fact, he accompanied Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters on the cross-country bus trip described in Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test,* a trip that became a landmark event for hippies and acid heads. He also visited Vietnam in 1971 to learn for himself what was happening there. Both experiences profoundly shaped his view of life and of America and consequently determined the nature of his fiction.

In his second novel, *Dog Soldiers,* a writer visits Vietnam in the early 70's and comes away with the impression that in Vietnam "the world of things transformed itself into a single overwhelming act of murder." Stone apparently was overwhelmed in the same way, and *Dog Soldiers* brings the Vietnam War home to America in the form of drugs and violence. Heroin smuggled from Vietnam into California symbolizes the state of mind of that war and leads to a Vietnam-like shootout in the Southwest.

Stone went to Vietnam thinking of the North Vietnamese as the good guys. This changed as he learned of their atrocities. In a manner not uncommon to disillusioned radicals, he concluded that there is no honor, morality or meaning anywhere. In an interview, he quotes a character in V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River:* "It isn't that there isn't any right or wrong, it's that there isn't any right!" To this he adds, "It's just that the ambiguities of life are infinite." And herein lies his central preoccupation as a writer: life's infinite ambiguities. But I would point out that his novels are less

Dr. Tanner is professor of English at Brigham Young University.

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than ambiguous in their portrayal of human life as essentially pointless and of America as a corrupt intruder into the affairs of other countries.

There is a depressing sameness about his three novels. They all focus upon the most sordid aspects of modern life: drugs, alcoholism, perverted sexuality, sadistic violence, moral and political corruption. They are like a tour of big cities that shows you nothing but skid-row alleys and the rest rooms of bus terminals. Stone seems as proud of his detailed depiction of the drugged or alcoholic drifter as Hemingway was of his authoritative depiction of men involved with war. He obviously considers it his strong suit. In Stone's fiction the world is so bad that everyone seeks a high on drugs and/or alcohol.

His novels are almost devoid of admirable characters, and he makes a statement which suggests why: "There is a certain reverence for the sociopath as a major cultural type in American society, along with the frontiersman, the puritan and the outlaw. I was trying to recognize that very fact: the importance of the rootless, emotionally crippled individual in American life." If he begins with these assumptions, it is natural that his main characters are drifters, morally disoriented, undisciplined and alienated. A typical example is Rheinhardt in his first novel, *A Hall of Mirrors,* who awakes the morning after watching passively while a companion murders in cold blood and recalls "that people had been killed on the previous night. How about that? This," he thinks, "will take some walking away from." Walking away from or forgetting as soon as possible is for Stone's principal characters the usual answer to immoral and criminal behavior. A world without right provides no grounds for commitment or remorse.

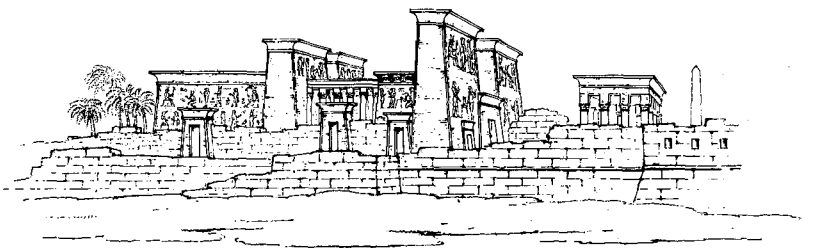
Of course the reverence for the sociopath Stone mentions is not felt by American society as a whole; it is a perversity of liberal sentimentality. Most people recognize that without discipline man faces despair. Indeed, in a way he did not intend, this is exactly what Stone's novels demonstrate. To make the sociopath—the moral wanderer—the center of consciousness in novels that explore the underside of life is inevitably to establish loneliness, rootlessness and moral insensitivity as a kind of norm. Stone, although obviously a talented writer, begins with questionable and sometimes plainly erroneous assumptions—assumptions that result from being overwhelmed by the alleged revolution of the 60's and early 70's. Consequently, despite his display of writing skill, there is a false and alarming distortion in his artistic vision. Richard Poirier detects something of this sort when he points out in the conclusion of his review of *A Flag for Sunrise* that the American imperialism Stone attacks is matched by a novelistic imperialism: "I mean that desire for the glamour of ruin that can be articulated only by first discrediting and then disposing of whatever might challenge it, including a clear head." This kind of imperialism, suggests Poirier, may be as reprehensible as any other kind.

Stone's novelistic imperialism derives from the paranoia characteristic of the 60's counterculture. This paranoia is apparent in each of his novels. Political officials, police, the military, the FBI and CIA, big business, evangelical religion, wealthy ultraconservatives—all are predictably, uniformly and usually grotesquely portrayed as hypocritical, morally degenerate and vicious. Although Stone is at a loss to locate a source of good in the world, he seems confident that he knows the source of evil.

The focal point of *A Flag for Sunrise* is a revolution in the fictional Central American country of Tecan, which Stone has said is representative "of all those places in the world, particularly in Latin America, that are beset by the American presence and that are ill-governed. In another way, it *is* the world." Three separate sets of characters are treated alternatingly until they converge in Tecan on the eve of the revolution. One set is situated in Tecan from the beginning. A priest and his assistant, a nursing nun, are lingering at a Catholic mission that is intended to be closed and converted by a large American fruit and vegetable company into a resort. Both lack faith and are foul-mouthed. The priest is an alcoholic whose religious faith has lapsed into a peculiar mystical pessimism. "Satan," he says, "is the way things are."

Stone, reared a Catholic, lost his faith at 17. His experience with LSD awakened a religious sense: "Even though drug mysticism is a vulgarization of the real thing, I think it made me come to terms with my own religious impulses. There is some sort of religious impulse in every novel I've written." There is a question about what he means by religious. The only religious impulse discernable in his fiction is a vague recognition that reality is more mysterious than it first appears, a kind of post-acid awareness that what we consider reality is brittle. Certainly there is no impulse resembling Christian discipline.

The nun passes for an admirable character; indeed, she is the martyr of the novel. After six years in Tecan, she is feeling lonely and empty. She does not believe in the Church, and she fights against praying to a God who permits poverty and injustice. She thinks her work has failed because what she should



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have been doing during those six years was helping defend the people "from these American flunky thugs that run things here." Her fiery idealism seems largely a product of a frustrated personal life. Her only happiness comes from assisting the revolutionaries, and she is content to die for that cause.

The center of the second set of characters is a violent, amphetamine-fueled sociopath who goes AWOL from the Coast Guard to become a soldier of fortune in Central America. Little more than an animal, he experiences rudimentary and superstitious yearnings to discover self-worth. His dream is of power to get back at a world that keeps "turning him around."

At the center of the third set, and perhaps the central consciousness of the novel, is a near-alcoholic professor of anthropology. He specializes in the study of the family, yet is alienated from and disloyal to his own wife and children and sees the family as "an instrument of grief." If not a Vietnam burn-out, he is at least "badly seared." He sees himself as "really without beliefs, without hope . . . Alone." Human life for him is a purposeless whirl: "The things people do don't add up to an edifying story. There aren't any morals to this confusion we're living in. I mean you can make yourself believe any sort of fable about it. They're all bullshit."

He comes to Central America to present a paper. Before leaving he is approached by a friend in the CIA whom he had helped with some simple intelligence work in Vietnam. This friend wants him to visit Tecan and discover whether the priest and the nun are involved in revolutionary intrigue. He refuses, but nevertheless, in a purposeless way, ends up at the mission. On every hand in Central America he sees parallels with Vietnam and is constantly aware of what he views as the intrusive, exploitative and corrupting American presence.

From the standpoint of craft, the novel is masterfully done. The convergence of the main characters seems inevitable. The events, though often unsettling or appalling, are powerfully fascinating. A pattern of reef imagery effectively suggests a sinister, shark-infested underwater realm in human consciousness. The characters are symbolically resonant. The title comes from these lines of Emily Dickinson: "A Wife—at Daybreak I shall be—/ Sunrise—Hast thou a Flag for me?" The nun quotes the lines, but the motif of sunrise functions for the others as well. The writing is skillful, at times to the point of exhibitionism.

The *New York Times Book Review* acclaimed *A Flag for Sunrise* as one of the ten best books of the year. *Dog Soldiers* won the National Book Award in 1975. *A Hall of Mirrors* was also honored, though in a less significant way. Is Stone's fiction really that good? It depends on what standards are applied. Denis Donoghue has pointed out that "in modern literature consciousness is the secular form of virtue." Stone vividly creates a kind of consciousness: self-indulgent, self-destructive, paranoid, alienated. He ranks high if describing consciousness is viewed as an end in itself. But if the quality of that consciousness is evaluated according to whether it corresponds with human experience accurately and comprehensively viewed, or whether it is life-affirming, his fiction deserves no awards.

The Vietnam War obviously has had an important impact on our nation in ways we are still discovering. But to despise America and lose faith in man's moral possibilities is a dangerous and narrow-viewed overreaction. Human beings remain much the same, Vietnam notwithstanding. They are capable of good as well as evil, wisdom as well as folly. That a talented writer like Robert Stone should be so demoralized by the Vietnam War is to be lamented along with the other blunders of that war, for such despair simply compounds those errors. □

Antimodernism as Cultural Hegemony

T.J. Jackson Lears: *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1920;* Pantheon Books; New York.

by J. David Hoeveler, Jr.

Van Wyck Brooks made an arresting comment when he reviewed the classic names in American literature in his 1915 book, *America's Coming-of-Age:* "If my soul were set on the accumulation of dollars, not one of [these writers] would have the power to move me from it." Brooks articulated here a problem in criticism that has been the bane of the left in America ever since. Critics and historians of this persuasion have discovered that American culture has been in bed with American capitalism. However reluctantly, however unknowingly, by design or by seduction, American thinkers, even those who place themselves in a dissenting posture, have been the vehicles for the cultural and economic dominance of the "ruling classes." Capitalist society, this theory says, is powerfully integrative, neutralizing and amalgamating the forces of tension and opposition within itself. Alienation, dissent and the counterculture are easily absorbed and become the new vehicles of our happy unfreedom.

We have here the latest variation on this theme. T.J. Jackson Lears has written a thought-provoking and conceptually flawed book. The subject of antimodernism is indeed an intriguing one, and we have it presented here in its manifold facets. Despite its diversity, antimodernism united writers, intellectuals and art-

Dr. Hoeveler is professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

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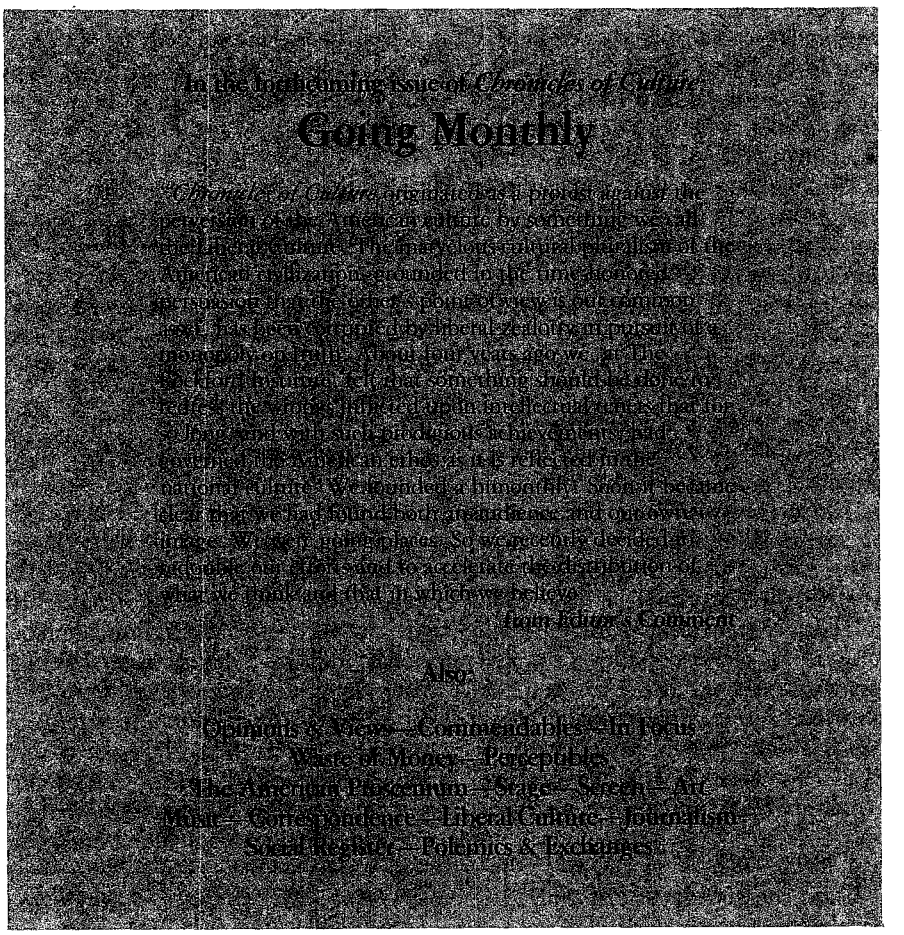
ists on common grounds. For both here and in Europe, sensitive individuals of the late 19th and early 20th centuries experienced a malaise, a feeling of overcivilization, a loss of vitality, a spiritual sterility and the emptiness of a "weightless culture." It is the expression of these moods that Lears pursues in his study. He is careful to note the idiomatic qualities of this phenomenon in the United States. Our antimodernists were all old-stock Americans; an overwhelming number of them had been reared in the New England intellectual tradition, and with striking consistency each was left to wrestle with the legacy of a religious tradition that had grown flat. Indeed, the critique of liberal Protestantism, a religion of sinlessness and faith in an optimism devoid of tragedy, was a major vehicle of antimodernism in America. The most engaging exponents of antimodernism turned from this bland religiosity to rediscover the Middle Ages, to absorb and reinvigorate the splendor of Gothic, to immerse themselves in High Church Anglo-Catholic ceremonialism, to learn what they could from the heroic personalities of the saints.

Ultimately at stake in this process was the quest for authentic experience, a theme Lears develops with much insight. Others among the antimodernists sought authenticity by encouraging an arts-and-crafts movement. The leaders in this effort recoiled from leisure-class dilettantism and sought to revive an eroding work ethic by instilling habits of discipline and sobriety into authentic craftsmanship. By this means also a work process that the machine age had rendered perfunctory and regimented might permit to workmen the innovative effort enjoyed by the builders of Gothic churches and celebrated by Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice*. Still others among the antimodernists celebrated martial ideals. Amid fears of a wasting enervation in modern society, this group posed the ideal of the strenuous life, athletics and outdoor activity, the invigorating life of war and imperialistic adventure. These might warm the blood of a civilization surfeited by commercial habits. To some, like Brooks Adams, the martial virtues were a veritable surrogate for religion. These varieties of antimodernism produced a weighty list of characters—Charles Eliot Norton, Henry and Brooks Adams, William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Frank Norris, Ralph Adams Cram and many others. They emerged from the "best" ranks of American society and they offered the highest academic and artistic credentials. No drifters on the fringe were these.

But what is one to make of this phenomenon, cresting so richly in *fin de siècle* America? Lears is determined to locate some higher meaning in these experiences that will show how antimodernist dissent actually perpetuated the class power of the dissenters. It is an effort that brings upon him a host of troubles. Acknowledging the influence on his thinking of the Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci, Lears is convinced that dominant social groups maintain their power not through force but through their cultural hegemony. Lears would like to sympathize fully with these antimodernists who recoiled from a culture he detests. But since they failed to transform American capitalism and bourgeois dominance, their movement must somehow have been flawed. It was. Lears argues that antimodernism became for its subscribers a means for restoring the fragmented self; it succumbed to self-indulgence and became a mode of therapy. Therapeutic culture, really only the pursuit of thrills, easily prepared the



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way for a culture of consumerism marked by the hedonism that characterizes modern capitalist society. Much of his work is simply a vehicle for Lears to expatiate upon his own anxieties about our oppressive culture, and the antimodernists become accomplices to its insidious course. But the reader is given fair warning. "All scholarship," Lears says, "is—or ought to be—a kind of intellectual autobiography." The author takes this somewhat pretentious statement very seriously. And while this practice can make some scholarship interesting, it does not make all scholarship good.

Consider, then, the fate of antimodernism under Lears's interpretation. The arts-and-crafts movement easily became a self-indulgent aestheticism, a pursuit of *objets d'art.* In doing so it "helped legitimize the emerging culture of conspicuous consumption." And by another process that is never explained, the arts-and-crafts movement was "influenced by a developing corporate ideology" that smoothed the adjustment to the "inevitable process of rationalization" by which that ideology sustained the ruling classes in America. Lears seems to think that the arts-and-crafts spokesmen comprised a potential revolutionary cadre which might have transformed capitalist America. But, fatal fact, they were also involved in business and even sold their products on the commercial market. This compromise, compounded by political naiveté, deprived the movement of its reforming power. And it leaves the author very disappointed.

The antimodern medievalists also went the way of all bourgeois flesh. According to Lears, this group found in medievalism a model of youth, the spirit of innocence and spontaneity that contrasted with the stifling rationalism of modernism. The childlike qualities of medieval saints proved attractive. But in trying to make sense of all this Lears drops an explanation that strains credulity. "The spontaneous child," he writes, "served to reinforce accommodation to new, secular modes of capitalist cultural hegemony." So by this time one is aware that a facile causality dominates much of this book, and is prepared for further speculative flights. Thus the High Church movement was ultimately mere aestheticism, the worship of luxury, the culture of therapy, and it "eased the transition" to triumphant capitalist consumerism. Or, perhaps the most bewildering statement of all: "Antimodern longings for authentic experience, by promoting the self-absorption of the therapeutic world view, provided fertile emotional ground for the growth of the twentieth-century corporate system." Lears does not deem it worth his time to indulge the reader with any substantive justification for this fanciful assertion.

Were there then any redeeming virtues in this antimodernist phenomenon? Lears is deeply ambivalent toward the experiences he describes, but his evaluations become positive when he perceives in its expressions "genuine" religious qualities. For in their escape from secular rationalism, antimodernists revealed a "vein of religious longing" that in fact became the one feature that forestalled full accommodation to the prevailing culture. But this intriguing suggestion loses force as the book elaborates what its author is willing to credit as authentic religious expression. Thus as the arts-and-crafts leaders protested against the heavy materialism of their world, they embraced nontheologically "the husk of puritanical habit." Is Benjamin Franklin, then, our modern Augustine? Lears also perceives in the cult of militarism some genuine religious sentiment, for it was an effort to endow weightless modern culture with "seriousness and purpose." But is that sufficient to credit the cult of blood and might with a religious character? Unquestionably the various forms of antimodernism did express *pseudo*religious qualities.

Lears's commentary on this subject reveals a clear parallel with the problem discussed with some insight by Herbert Marcuse in *One-Dimensional Man.* Lears clearly implies that what alone can save culture from invariable accommodation to technocratic capitalism is commitment to an absolutistic whole that transcends selfhood, or otherwise escapes pluralistic and relativistic measures of good. This relativistic ethic underlies the indiscriminate consumerism that is the vehicle of capitalism's dominance. Marcuse developed this point with particular acuteness when he offered his critique of philosophical pragmatism. Pragmatism, because it rejects all transcendent absolutes and especially rejects a metaphysics of universals, can connect the mind only to experienced things. Emerging in the late 19th century, when American capitalism achieved its ultimate triumph, pragmatism perfectly suited a culture that defined its highest good in the acquisition of objects. Pragmatic culture knew no standards by which to check the relativistic ethic of a society that valued only indefinite material consumption. The problem is directly germane to Lears's search for the redeeming religious qualities of antimodernism. Where they could be found, these qualities promised some kind of ultimate loyalty that could withstand the otherwise inevitable lapse into accommodation. Had Lears pursued the religious question with greater sensitivity, he would have given more force to his statement, "in our time, the most profound radicalism is often the most profound conservatism."

Perhaps it is best to say at this point that the problems discussed above intrude recurrently in this book, but they do not wholly dominate the subject. At his best Lears is sensitive to the subtle character of cultural behavior and the idiosyncrasies of individuals. He does in fact say that not all of antimodernism can be understood by reference to class. When Lears does liberate himself from a rigid framework of explanation, he is at his best as an historian. The final chapter, one devoted exclusively to Henry Adams, is a provocative and revealing analysis. For, as Lears says of Adams, "his life and work embodied all the major themes of antimodernism."

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Lears's discussion here suggestively reveals how complex antimodernism really was and how intriguing a subject it is. Here we have the revolt from anemic overcivilization, the disquietude from liberal Protestantism, the surrogate religion of medievalism, the profound alienation from the new business order of America, and, withal, the pervasive ambivalence that marked the retreat into antimodernism. Lears, in treating Adams, has recourse to psychobiography and pursues it sensitively and convincingly.

In the middle of his book, Lears comments that one must "take art and religion seriously." One can only wish that Lears had taken this admonition more seriously himself. The antimodernists seldom are permitted to make their case on their own terms. The overriding conspiratorial perspective pervades, and we have antimodernism judged mostly by its indirectly contributing role in the wearisome story of triumphant bourgeois culture in America. Yet who cannot be sympathetic to these dissenters from a materialistic society and its rationalized and bureaucratic mode of life? Lears has this sympathy, but then draws back amid his own surely questionable claims that antimodernism "spread throughout American society" and thus enabled Wasp elites to reclaim their dominance through this cultural hegemony. Here is cause for reflection. In Europe antimodernism flourished and came to fruition in the various forms of fascism that arose there in the 1920's and 30's; fragile liberal democracies tottered and fell. How might Henry and Brooks Adams—frightened, vexed, unconfident voices of American antimodernism —have reacted if they had known that their dissent from the materialistic, democratic, liberal culture of their day would become the vehicle of the recovered power of their elite class?

But to pose this question is only to show how far off the point this subject has strayed. Were Lears not so obsessed with Gramsci and the leftist perspective, he might have paused to ask how capitalistic society in this period spurred so much cultural variety. Theodore Dreiser, noted novelist and no friend of bourgeois America, pleaded America's defense in 1925. Here, he said, flourished a rich pluralism that gave vitality and genuine variety to human life. Here too were fertile fields for the creative imagination to till. A society is more than its technocratic arrangements and its class structures. Dreiser knew this and understood that, for all its banalities, bourgeois and capitalistic America had many worlds in which one could live. Antimodernism, too, created several worlds and in doing so gave variety and vitality to the culture of a triumphant capitalist society. Single-party socialist states have their elites and privileged sets, the rhetoric of egalitarianism notwithstanding. Not one, however, displays the cultural variety or vitality that marked American life in the two decades before and after 1900, qualities that have become more prolific since. In the early 1930's Van Wyck Brooks abandoned his older, narrower standards for measuring the achievements of American writers. In his supreme work, *The Flowering of New England,* he approached the classic writers of the romantic era on their own terms and ceased to fret about their power to sway him from the pursuit of dollars. But that was never the real issue anyway. □

Down the Road from Heartbreak Hotel

Albert Goldman: *Elvis;* McGraw-Hill; New York.

by Gary S. Vasilash

Listening to Presley's earlier recordings, one detects an authenticity that's lacking in much of the music of both then and now. At age 22 he was a young man who sang not in any extraordinary manner—there are many echoes of Jerry Lee Lewis—but with an appealing verve. Even if one never saw clips of early television performances, *Stage Show* or Sullivan, one can sense the kinetic nature of Presley's songs; they demand movement. Other recordings in the rock genre produced in the 50's, particularly those with inane repetitions, don't even evoke the slightest toe twitching, just headaches.

Remarkably, Presley's career—in my estimation—was based on eight songs that were released during a two-year period: "Heartbreak Hotel," "Love Me Tender," "Hound Dog" and "Don't Be Cruel" from 1956, "Teddy Bear," "Loving You," "Jailhouse Rock" and "I'm All Shook Up" from 1957.

What Elvis really wanted was to be a movie star. He certainly had his chance. In 12 years he starred in 29 movies. During this period, which was initiated in a big way in 1959 after his return from a tour of duty with the U.S. Army, his record albums were little more than soundtracks and repackages. I defy anyone but the most bleary-eyed Presley fan to recount the plot from any of Elvis's films. Basically, they all take the women from Dean Martin films and the situations from Bob Hope's, and the whole thing is covered with the mantle of Presley's image. Not only is it difficult to remember anything about what happens in Presley movies (with, perhaps, the exception of the outstanding choreography in *Jailhouse Rock* when the title song is performed by a tough, lithe Presley), but the music is also bathed in the waters of Lethe. What came out of *Girls! Girls! Girls!, Girl Happy* or *Roustabout*? Are there any Presley standards in *Speedway,* a movie whose major distinction is Nancy Sinatra singing "Your Groovy Self"?

I don't think that Elvis was so stupid that he didn't recognize that he was be-

Mr. Vasilash is associate editor of the Chronicles.

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coming a parody of himself as each new film went into the can. Yet he seems to have been so manipulated by circumstances, by his manager "Colonel" Parker, that he was unable to do anything but inexorably become a bigger-than-life, flickering image on a screen. Musical achievement was recorded only on early wax; the subsequent gold records were representative of nothing more than marketing. It's plausible that Elvis's behavior became increasingly abased simply because his life had no center: he was a construct designed to sell LP's and popcorn.

Albert Goldman has impressive credentials. He received an M.A. from the University of Chicago and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. He studied for his Ph.D. at Columbia with Lionel Trilling and Jacques Barzun. He has taught in a number of schools in New York, and has been published in periodicals ranging from *Commentary* to *High Times*. He wears his erudition on the sleeve of his toga, making references to figures from Savonarola to Casanova, Louis XIV to Baron Corvo. Throughout his 591 pages, Goldman treats Elvis Presley the way most of us do a centipede during an unexpected encounter: it is revolting, yet there is a grudging respect born of fascination with the remarkable engineering. Still, we try our best to squash the vermin with the heel of a shoe. I once read somewhere—probably in one of those *People's Book of Lists*—that Presley's given name was the single most recognized name in the world at one time. While that may not be true, I dare say that there are few in the English-speaking world above age 15 that don't know who Elvis was, and some probably think that Elvis still *is*.

I must confess to nearly total ignorance of Albert Goldman before reading *Elvis*. My only other encounter was in the six-for-$5 cutout book rack at K-mart, where I found an earlier tome of Goldman's, *Disco*, along with *Introduction to Mathematics, Abnormal Psychology, This Is Nursing*, and the like. While biographical criticism is a tricky thing, I must raise this question: Does Albert Goldman, Ph.D., Phi Beta Kappa, treat Elvis Aron Presley, high-school graduate, with such abhorrence simply because such a nobody became a Somebody while such a should-have-been was rapidly becoming a might-have-been? The green-eyed monster is a ghoulish creature, and this biography is nothing if not vampirish.

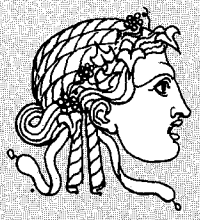
When Elvis left the stage, he was 22. He returned 12 years later. When Elvis hit the boards once again, the King of rock 'n' roll did not go to the Fillmore or a similar psychedelic palace. Rather, he opened at the International Hotel in Las Vegas. Some, like Goldman, see that as a terrible mistake, a sellout; they assert that he should have made his return in something like the Fillmore or, at the very least, a Hollywood Bowl-type arena. Perhaps the International Hotel dates were only for the convenience of Col. Parker's gambling needs, but it was a perfect setup for Elvis.

Examine the travel section in a Sunday newspaper. Undoubtedly there will be package tours offered for the Caribbean, Acapulco, Hawaii and Las Vegas—especially Las Vegas. A popular nickname for that town is "Lost Wages." That says much about the type of people who pick up on those packages and go there: they are paid not white-collar salaries but wages; they are the ones who went to see Elvis or John Wayne flicks with the family at a drive-in on Saturday nights in the late 60's. Vegas is the place where they can be dazzled by flashing lights and clicking chips that miraculously become dollars, where they can indulge that urge that is ordinarily vented on bingo at the church hall or penny-ante poker. And the inexpensive meals and big-name entertainment of Las Vegas are legendary. So, by going to Vegas to relaunch his career, Elvis went back to *his* people, not to the rock affectionatos who had sprung up in the 60's clutching their bible, *Rolling Stone*.

When Presley resumed touring, he didn't hit the rock 'n' roll-revival circuit taken by Sha Na Na, Chuck Berry and the rest. Rather, he hit smaller towns: Monroe, Louisiana; Auburn, Alabama; Hampton Roads, Virginia and the like. The day he died he was scheduled to appear in Portland, Maine. He played to the people who had been buying his records through the years, the folk who were sure to see his movies, the ones who lined up along Elvis Presley Boulevard and outside the Music Gate in August 1977 to pay their respects to the fallen

LIBERAL CULTURE

Buddy Rogers's Anguish



As a star of the silent-film era, Buddy Rogers had opportunities aplenty to express sorrow, grief and agony through the agility of his face. The last husband of Mary Pickford and one of the heroes of William Wellman's classic *Wings*, Buddy Rogers's face was engraved in the memory of the older generation of movie-goers as the quintessence of boyish American handsomeness. But we wonder what expression must have been on that face as the 77-year-old Buddy recently told an interviewer the following:

> There's a scene in 'Wings' where Dick Arlen is dying, and I cry and kiss him. Now, they're trying to make something out of that scene that wasn't there. One smart young reporter asked me once if there wasn't something going on between Arlen and me in the movie, and I asked him, 'What the hell are you talking about, man? That's just the way we felt in those days; we didn't think anything about it.' I don't know what gets into people these days. □

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king. Whatever else Elvis really was, he was still one of them.

I queried two young ladies, one 19 and the other 35, about their memories of Elvis. The younger, a fan of rock music and a regular attendee at rock shows, didn't picture a raucous, wild, hip-shaking young man or even a diamond-studded white-jumpsuited Vegas star. Instead, she said that his eating habits, which she had heard about "somewhere" (funny how such things get around), immediately came to mind. Elvis's dietary regimen—when he wasn't starving himself and eating powerful pharmaceuticals in order to fit into his raiment—would have made Judy Mazel, Nathan Pritikin et al. gape in horror. He had a penchant for eating burned—not crisp—bacon with a side order of mashed potatoes and gravy. Nitrates, carbohydrates, saturated fats. He didn't regularly utilize implements to manipulate said eatables. Goldman is quite concerned about what Elvis ate. Odd, this fascination with what dead performers consumed and with the type of dinnerware the First Family uses.

Looking at the photos in the Goldman biography, the 19-year-old suddenly stopped flipping pages and remarked, "That's him!" Her vision of the man whose sensuality bowled over countless thousands of women? A middle-aged man with greasy Prince Valiant-type locks and sideburns that point down toward his chin, his first chin. The overweight gent has slit-shaped eyes in deep, dark pockets, eyes that scream for sleep. He is wearing a heavily spangled white jumpsuit with a plunging V-neckline that ends approximately one roll above his navel. Around his neck are three chains, each carrying a medallion. Closest to the chins is the Jewish chai symbol made with gems, presumably diamonds. Next, there's the Christian cross, a rather large one. And third, there's what appears to be (the photo quality is somewhat grainy) an Eisenhower silver dollar. The man is as sexy as burned bacon and mashed potatoes.

The second woman, the 35-year-old, summed up her reaction to Elvis with a facial expression: she winced.

They are not atypical. Nor are the others, the ones who buy the Elvis T-shirts and black-velvet paintings sold on weekends from abandoned gas-station lots, the people who place "The King Lives!" bumper stickers on the backs of their cars, the dedicated who jam the formica and citronella-candle-decorated bars on weekends to see the Elvis impersonators.

Elvis has never evoked indifference.

Nobody wants a fat Elvis. The image is not revolting because it is of a corpulent man—we see them every day. Orson Welles is acceptable, and we are not repelled when we see him in a wine commercial. A hefty Elvis is not acceptable because the American ideal is more along the lines of the tough, street-wise punk that Elvis was in his twenties. Presley knew that, so he took drastic measures to reduce prior to performances once his salad days were far behind. An extraordinary dependence on drugs was the result. It took a toll on his music, personal relationships, ultimately his life. All to be semisvelte.

When Brando appeared in *The Godfather,* there were no objections to his size—pneumatic by comparison with the figure he cut in his leather-jacket T-shirt phase—because of his fine performance. When Brando did the million-dollar bit part in *Superman* he was savaged for being bloated. We want *The Wild One.* James Dean had it right.

Just as Renaissance-era painters idealized the portraits of their patrons and leaders, T-shirt manufacturers and poster printers show only a vital and vibrant Elvis on their wares. How accurate A.E. Housman was in his "To an Athlete Dying Young" is probably more apparent today than ever before. On a recent trip to Houston, I saw a billboard for a rock radio station, which featured a photograph of Jim Morrison. Morrison was the lead singer of a rock group known as The Doors. He has been dead for over 10 years and is more popular now than ever. The T-shirts, posters and buttons with Morrison's image on them are like those with Elvis's. They show a hard, lean Morrison, not the heavy, bearded man he became. We want our slender heroes preserved in amber.

I once took a girl whom I was trying to win to hear a singer. This was no ordinary date—I had a plan. The singer sang sweet ballads, and I was sure they'd melt my Dulcinea's heart. I'd be ready with arms waiting. One thing I didn't count on was the singer's appearance. I had assumed that he'd, in some way, resemble me. The vision of his arrival on stage is etched in my memory: he had the build of a fasting shrimp, and he wore a fuchsia bodystocking. His hair was multicolored. And in his hand—I swear this is true—he held a wand with a plastic star on its end. He could have dedicated every song to my inamorata and me. I wouldn't have known. I was cataleptic. I didn't win the girl's heart.

It's commonly thought that the success of male performers—Elvis, in particular—is based upon adoring female fans who fantasize being with the performer. But for every woman wanting Elvis, there must be a man imagining himself wearing the King's blue suede shoes. □

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The Creedal Connection

Samuel P. Huntington: *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony;* The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts.

by Daniel J. O'Neil

Coming from a political scientist, this book is a pleasant surprise. The American branch of the study of politics increasingly has turned from questions of ultimate concern to scholastic exercises about methodological purity and to accentuating the obvious, especially when it is quantifiable. Disproportionate resources are channeled toward the study of a minor part of politics—electoral behavior. Viewed historically and comparatively, elections are of recent vintage and meaningful in a limited number of polities. Still, the belief that to quantify is to prove and only that which is quantifiable is worth studying gives American political science a distorted focus. Huntington's book is unattuned to that focus —it is not an election study.

Samuel Huntington made his mark originally with his study of institutionalization. He noted the potential conflict between modernization and institutions and stressed the need for reconciliation. During the post-World War II optimism about Third World decolonization, he dissented—and later was vindicated. Now he turns to the realm of ideas and the labyrinth of American history, producing a work that deserves the attention of political scientists and historians alike. Although not of the caliber of Tocqueville and Bryce, it should join the significant works of Brogan and Hartz. It is a meaty work, full of challenge and provocation that invite response. He espouses an interpretation of American history that will explain the past and facilitate future prediction. He provides a critique of the traditional interpretations—the Progressive, the consensual and the interest group—contending that they minimize the significance of ideas and that they assume a future similar to the past. He builds on these traditions, but modifies and moves beyond them.

The Huntington thesis stresses the central role of ideas in American development. It portrays the United States as a creedal society; American nationality is creedal rather than organic, intertwined with certain beliefs enshrined in our patristic documents stemming from 17th-century Protestantism and 18th-century liberalism. Without this creed there would be no America. Americans are not united by race, ethnicity or religion, but by belief. Their creed emphasizes liberty, equality, democracy and Constitutionalism. It is individualistic and anti-institutional, suspicious of authority, hierarchy, expertise and coercion. Historically, it has possessed consensual support and this consensus has been at the core of American conflict. Contrary to conventional wisdom, consensus can be conducive to disharmony. The conflict involves the discrepancy between the creed and the existential, and it pits those wanting immediate reform based on the creed against those in less of a hurry. The potential for conflict is always present because the creed will never be perfectly implemented. Thus the American polity bears the "promise of disharmony."

Huntington sees four possible responses to this creedal discrepancy—moralism, cynicism, complacency and hypocrisy—and he charts a cyclical movement through these stages. It is the first, moralism, that most concerns him. He sees periods of intense moralism, or "creedal passion," as attempts to end the theory vs. practice conflict through reform. They are periods of emotion, cause, polemic and heightened participation. They involve a perception of right vs. wrong, rather than more vs. less. There have been four such periods in American history—the Revolutionary, Jacksonian, Progressive and 60's-early 70's—and they tend to come at 60- to 70-year intervals. Each left an imprint, but each was doomed to frustration since enthusiasm cannot be long sustained. The last creedal outbreak left the U.S. a more equal, open, participatory society, but it also seriously destabilized important institutions and made it difficult to cope with domestic and foreign problems.

Huntington seems ambivalent about these creedal outbreak periods. The creed itself cannot be discarded since American being is defined by the creed and without it would not exist. The outbreaks are inevitable, given the creedal consensus and the perpetual discrepancy between the creed and reality. Although these periods do contribute to needed reform, still they undermine institutional legitimacy and eventually result in cynicism. With the increased level of education and participation, future creedal waves might prove even more disruptive than the past ones.

> ". . . schematic stinginess."
>
> —*The Nation*

Huntington sees the United States as unique in this creedal-existential battle. Most other western societies lack the American creedal consensus and tolerate creedal pluralism. Conflicts thus pit one idea against another rather than one consensual ideal against the actual. Marxist-Leninist societies allow only one creed, which is controlled by the bureaucratic-elitist establishment. To affirm the creed or to become more committed is simply to become more proregime. In contrast, the United States has a high level of support for creedal monism, but the creed swings freely and may be used by any person or group interested in challenging

Dr. O'Neil is professor of political science at the University of Arizona.

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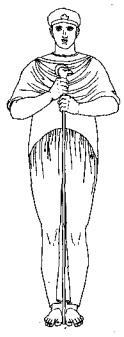
the current establishment. Huntington then breaks with most conventional attempts at interpreting American history by (1) his emphasis on the central role of ideas; (2) his view of consensus as the key to conflict; (3) his cyclical interpretation; and (4) his predictions concerning the future.

Like an increasingly large number of academicians—e.g. Berger, Nisbet, Bell, Greeley—Huntington seems fascinated by religion and its role in American development. He stresses the importance of the Protestant component in the American creed and suggests that America would not be itself without Protestantism. He cites the relevance of the Great Awakenings to creedal passion outbreaks and he speculates about the ramifications of increased secularization. He approvingly quotes Chesterton: "America is a nation with the soul of a church." Strangely, he fails to consider the most germane religious parallel to the U.S. creedal conflict, which indeed raises the question of the uniqueness of the American experience. The Catholic Church has traditionally lived with this same problem and has a much longer history of coping. It is based on a transcending, idealistic creed, but must operate in the mundane world. Like the U.S., it has a largely inborn clientele that has been taught the creed. Always there is the possibility of conflict between the ideal (Sermon on the Mount, etc.) and the world of institutions, authority, hierarchy and politics. There have been great reforming periods obsessed with the gap between the ideal and the actual—the monastic reform, the Counterreformation, Vatican II. The Church has confronted the problem of maintaining an unreachable ideal while surviving in the mundane world. It has attempted to preserve that ideal without allowing it to destroy the ecclesiastical structure. It has sought a balancing act that reconciles a Francis of Assisi with an Innocent III. The result is a perennial tension linked to a potential for conflict—and an impressive measure of success. The Catholic solution, thrashed out in the early Middle Ages, was to divide the spheres of influence. The bishops who wielded power usually were realists, adroit at dealing with the secular world. They thought in terms of a cost/benefit calculation, incremental change, ramification and system survival. The ideal was acknowledged, but it had to come to fruition in the world of matter. In essence the bishops tended to be Aristotelian. The enthusiasts (mystics, prophets, etc.), obsessed with the ultimate norm and the discrepancy between it and church politics, were usually denied the exercise of power and often relegated to the schools and monasteries. They might be canonized, but only posthumously. Thus there was room for both the Aristotelians (bishops) and Platonists (enthusiasts) within the official structure. Hence the Church preserved the vision of the ideal and usually avoided foolish action, thus enabling survival in the secular world. The point of this Roman excursion is to suggest that the American creedal case is not unique. Other institutions have experienced the problem and learned to adjust. There are comparative models available to the Americanists.

Huntington is to be commended for focusing on the creedal problem and according ideas their rightful place in American history. Other than its claim to uniqueness, the main problem with his schema is his fourth creedal period—1960's-early 70's. Is it really akin to the Revolutionary, Jacksonian and Progressive periods? It takes some stretching to attribute this last outbreak only to *American* theory-practice discrepancy, in view of its international character. The polemics, the demonstrations, the level of participation characterized many Western European societies as well. Does the fourth creedal period really mesh with the other three, or does it go well beyond them? Did something alien enter the polity? Motivation is complex, and there were many individuals and organizations that participated in the festivities of the 60's and 70's. Altogether they nurtured a cultural upheaval that affected family structure, sexual preference, drug use, music, dietary practice and general lifestyle. Although they attempted to politicize many nonpolitical aspects of life, political reform was but one part of their crusade. It requires a leap of faith to link this with Huntington's American creed, which is based on 17th-century Protestantism and 18th-century Lockean liberalism. The enthusiasts of the 60's and 70's seemed to have little in common with the creed or its progenitors. The people who condemned America, carried Vietcong flags and disrupted public meetings appealed to Marx and Guevara rather than to Washington and Jefferson. The Protestant work ethic, reason, discipline and property rights were not important considerations.

Huntington seems exceptionally charitable in attributing motives to these activists. He accepts at face value their commitment to the American creed and their desire to close the gap between creed and practice. This may describe some activists, but many others simply



Religion in America

From an inspired manifesto by a righteous group of dynamic Methodists whose motto—"I am setting a plumbline in the midst of my people . . ."—is taken from Amos 7:8 comes this:

> Last week in a local Federation gathering we discussed Reaganomics and the strategies of the conservative forces to fashion out of the present economic crisis a new and more 'efficient' revival of U.S. capitalism. A really dismal prospect to dwell upon! □

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In earlier epochs, a critic tormented only the writers...

Of all the cants which are canted in this canting world—though the cant of hypocrites may be the worst—the cant of criticism is the most tormenting.

Laurence Sterne

In ours, he torments everybody.

Recently a middle-aged father published a book about his sordid adventures in massage parlors, wife-swapping communes and the worlds of easy sex and prostitution. The critics were grateful to Gay Talese. *Newsweek* said that "Talese's research has an awesome solidity about it." *Vogue* was proud of "... Gay's triumph over the puritanical strictures of Ocean City, strictures that so inhibited him that he didn't even masturbate until his second year in college." And the *Chicago Tribune* – a newspaper respectable primarily in its own eyes—turned its enthusiasm into promotion by running excerpts of *Thy Neighbor's Wife* for Chicagoland families to read.

The state of literary criticism today strongly confirms Laurence Sterne's warning: the cant of criticism is the most tormenting. To make things worse, the modern media have transformed the critic into a midwife of mass consciousness. Regardless of what we wish to know or ignore, we live with cultural events and their consequences —as interpreted by the modern critic. Sadly, what passes for "cultural criticism" in *Time, Esquire, Chicago Tribune, Ladies Home Journal,* et al., amounts to an elitist, moral shoddiness.

The Critical Difference

In *Chronicles of Culture,* we feel there is a need for a counterpoise to those who judge cultural offerings without giving any thought to the impact of messages which are liberated from all codes of moral and intellectual responsibility. We firmly believe that culture, books, movies, behavioral trends—their meaning and success—deeply affect man's preferences and, consequently, his sense of moral and social order. We are not timid when we confront the liberal cultural cant. *The National Review* remarked that we, *"Go for the jugular. . . . Chronicles* reports on the reporters, and reviews the reviewers. Its verdicts have not been kind."

The Critical Response

In every issue, we challenge the dominant cultural establishment on what it preaches about culture, politics and social matters. Malcolm Muggeridge observed that "... in *Chronicles of Culture* the Consensus assumptions—that the *New York Times* is a great newspaper, that the South Africans are uniquely the villains of our time, that President Reagan is an idiot, that all good men and true build their hopes on disarmament talks with Mr. Brezhnev, etc. etc. etc.—are blissfully absent." Tom Wolfe said about our work, "It has been a pleasure to watch Leopold Tyrmand and the *Chronicles of Culture* confront—à la Orwell!—the smelly little orthodoxies of our time." And from the *London Times,* "... it is a relief to receive an American publication which puts forward another view. . . . [*Chronicles*] displays a pleasantly open and ironic position. . . . Who, among the liberal monopoly of power in this sphere, will reply to Tyrmand?"

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used the creed to destroy a system that they hated.

Despite the changes in American society and the turmoil of the past, Huntington is optimistic that the creed will survive. But will it suffice for a future of limited resources, excessive population, and foreign threat? Huntington perhaps too flippantly dismisses Willmore Kendall's suggestion that, given the built-in discrepancy between the creed and the existential, the 17th- and 18th-century ideas must be discarded. Perhaps Kendall's position might be modified: the creed is taught and learned, hence there is the possibility of flexibility.

Attempts to explain the American experience will and should continue. What is the meaning of the American experience? Is it an exception? Is it unique? How does it fit into European and world history? What can the past tell us about the future? Have we a future? About all of these questions Huntington has thought deeply and argues persuasively. He both builds upon and dissents from the conventional wisdom. His work merits consideration, but it is best read with some supplementary studies that place recent events in a somewhat different perspective: Paul Hollander's *Political Pilgrims,* Eric Voegelin's *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* and Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* would not detract from but rather supplement Huntington's "promise of disharmony." □

Passage to More than India

Raymond Nelson: *Van Wyck Brooks: A Writer's Life;* E.P. Dutton; New York.

by Joseph Schwartz

While reading Raymond Nelson's serviceable, competent biography of Van Wyck Brooks, I had occasion to consult my personal library to check particular passages in his work on American literature. Rather to my surprise, I discovered I owned a good deal more of his work than I had remembered. From the dates penned on inside covers it appears that I acquired my collection over a longish period of time—a hardcover or two from the early 40's, most from the late 40's when I was in graduate school, some after that for a quarter or so from the Salvation Army, Goodwill or St. Vincent de Paul stores, none after 1960. Although Stanley Edgar Hyman said in 1948 *(The Armed Vision)* that no one connected with literature had taken Brooks seriously for almost a decade, those of us then at Madison did. The University of Wisconsin was, in the late 40's, the great center for the study of American literature in the United States, and its distinguished professors took Brooks very seriously indeed. Almost every professor I knew was an historian of literature for which Brooks was the nearly perfect model. When the "other" Brooks (Cleanth) was invited to campus to talk about the new criticism a minor tempest arose. Howard Mumford Jones was asked to be on the same program just to keep the meeting honest. The union theater was filled to capacity, the smell of confrontation having drawn students. I remember only one member of the department who, afterward, was willing to allow that Cleanth Brooks had much to offer; Jones was generally regarded as having saved the meeting. Such were the battles that we in our innocence then fought.

For those concerned with American literature, a small minority then, Van Wyck Brooks was important. In his innocent radicalism he was discovering, or inventing, what he called with inadvertent arrogance a "usable past" for American literature. His method was in large part the method of history, not literature. All literary works were roughly of equal importance; each was a datum in the reconstruction of the past; each was an equally significant part of one index to our culture. I do not overstate the case when I say that Oliver W. Holmes was given more attention than Nathaniel Hawthorne and that Jefferson received more attention than Edward Taylor. It is instructive now to review the volumes in the American Authors Series (American Book Company) which had such powerful influence then, especially the one of Poe, for instance, who was admitted into the canon only after it could be shown that he, too, had extraliterary significance (political, social, scientific). Our professors were historical and "scientific" with a vengeance, and we were being trained to be like them. We did not think it outrageous, as I do now, that Brooks had read some 900 original works in preparation for the writing of *The Flowering of New England.* I can recall my admiration for the wealth of material it contained and the unusual approach it sometimes took. It was a time that simply had to produce *The Literary History of the United States,* and it did.

By way of taking a poll, I spent a week asking graduate students in my present Department of English if they knew of Van Wyck Brooks. Only three did, and none was able to give me the name of his magnum opus, *Makers and Finders.* He was one of the most influential critics of his time, winner of the Dial Prize in 1923, the National Institute of Arts and Letters Gold Medal in 1946 and many other honors in between and after. Edmund Wilson called him America's premier literary historian; Carl Van Doren described *Makers and Finders* as the best literary history in any language. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* While Nelson himself does not deal with why the *transit* was so rapid, he provides one with the information and impetus to pursue that subject.

Brooks was a leftist idealist and a socialist. He joined the Socialist Party in 1916 and was a Socialist candidate for office in 1936. Although the group he rep-

Dr. Schwartz edits Renascence, *a literary quarterly.*

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resented grew quite conservative as time passed, the original liberal sensibility remained the most powerful force on whatever legacy he may have left us. Hence, it is important to understand something about his anti-Marxist socialism. "I caught it from my wife," he told Malcolm Cowley. He was an old-fashioned socialist who could not make class warfare the tyrannizing principle of his social philosophy. He was also the kind of socialist who could build a mansion in a rich man's suburb with the proceeds from his later affluence. He trusted, or thought he did, in the fundamental decency and intelligence of people. He believed in social justice and to that end favored the elimination of economic competition. Socialism was pretty much what he wanted it to be: at one time it was Jeffersonian democracy and at another time it was "pure Christianity." Bohemian poverty was literary, making him delight in holes in his trousers and shoes, "wearing at the same time a flower in my buttonhole." His conscience was at peace when he connected himself "with the venerable cult of shabbiness, poverty and failure." Brooks flirted with a social philosophy which he would never really put in practice. He best illustrates the type of intellectual Lionel Trilling described as never testing his ideas in the real world. The communists were the first, I believe, to find him tiresome. After some initial resistance, he became associated with the League of American Writers, the successor to the John Reed Clubs. It was not until after the Soviet invasion of Finland that he broke from the Marxist group. There was an unmistakable naiveté in his political side:

> . . . though I believe in the humanitarian mission of socialism, my own angle of approach is not humanitarian but personal. I consider individualism the very worst enemy of personality.

Good was progressivism and the future; evil, if not an illusion, was the barbarism of the past. If antifascism led to pro-Marxism, well, he would think about that tomorrow.

Like Waldo Frank, Anatole France and others of that stripe, Brooks was ambitious to develop a general system of culture, a theory that would account for what the United States was and could become. He held the conventional liberal position that the great writer is or can be the single greatest force for social change. (One remembers how Waldo Frank almost destroyed Hart Crane with that formula.) His study of Herbert Spencer led him to believe that the great writer was one who believed in social and spiritual evolution: "The principle of inevitable progress . . . stirred his deepest imagination." He was fond of the Spanish saying that the left is on the side of the heart.

> But certainly no true social revolution will ever be possible in America till a race of artists, profound and sincere, has brought us face to face with our own experience and set working in that experience the leaven of the highest culture.

Revolutions are made valid by their exalted desires. Brooks was typical of a kind of intellectual of that era: Newton Arvin, Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, Archibald MacLeish, Clifford Odets, Donald Ogden Stewart. They wanted a "literary" war and found it in Spain, but to their horror the blood was real. What Brooks did finally was to work up a usable past which found its mainspring in the Jefferson-Emerson-Whitman tradition. The whole liberal aesthetics since World War I has been built on that basis. This progressive, utopian liberalism affirmed life and believed in the future, maintaining that man was by nature trustworthy and good. After Whitman came Lincoln, the early Melville, the early Twain and William Dean Howells. The disastrous alternate "antitradition" set against it was aristocratic, conservative and pessimistic, preoccupied with sin and bound to the past. These "traitors to human hope" grew out of puritanism, the end result being the monster, T.S. Eliot. Brooks's abomination of Eliot was not, I think, irrational, although the depth of it may be problematical: he hoped that Eliot would die in agony. He knew the enemy when he saw him; Eliot stood for everything that Brooks despised. I suspect that

In the Mail

The Quest for Excellence: The Neo-Conservative Critique of Educational Mediocrity **by Norman R. Phillips; Philosophical Library; New York.** A comprehensive analysis of the conservative educational philosophy by an educator who has taught at every level from kindergarten to graduate school.

Christian Married Love **edited by Raymond Dennehy; Ignatius Press; San Francisco.** A collection of essays considering the ethical, Biblical and theological aspects of birth control within marriage.

Addicted to Mediocrity: 20th-Century Christians and the Arts **by Franky Schaeffer; Crossway Books; Westchester, Illinois.** In an illustrated paperback volume, Mr. Schaeffer provides a provocative and unflinching critique of the current condition of the arts, expressed in the broadest sense, from home decorating to the works of Michelangelo. With wit and humor he offers suggestions for becoming "unaddicted" to the current mediocrity.

Modern Social and Political Philosophies: Burkean Conservatism and Classical Liberalism **by Dwight D. Murphey; University Press of America; Washington, D.C.** The second in a series which analyzes major competing systems for the interpretation of social reality in modern society.

The Effect of Collective Bargaining on Teacher Salaries; **Public Service Research Council; Vienna, Virginia.** An examination of the actual change in educational salaries during the last 15 years and to what means those changes may be attributed.

C.S. Lewis and the Church of Rome **by Christopher Derrick; Ignatius Press; San Francisco, California.** Possible explanations of C.S. Lewis's writings and why he remained Anglican rather than becoming Roman Catholic, written by a Roman Catholic.

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there was some jealousy mixed in as well.

Brooks's liberalism made it impossible for him to understand or to be fair to a great many of the most significant 20th-century writers: Proust, Joyce, Pound, Eliot, Stein, Faulkner. They were, like Hawthorne and the later Melville, concerned with sin, weakness, the chaos of the present and, as such, were probably fascist to the core. For Brooks, Whitman was the moral hero of American literature, the writer most fully engaged in his work—the artist as hero. While many are repelled by Whitman's excessive individualism, Brooks did not see him that way. He saw instead an expression of personality as the great writer moved heroically in the direction of social change. Whitman gave us for the first time the sense "of something organic in American life"; he "precipitated the American character"; he created out of disparate materials a fresh democratic ideal. Everything good in the modern world owes something to Whitman; he laid the "cornerstone of a national ideal"; like Virgil, he gave to America "A certain focal center in the consciousness of his own character." What Whitman stood for was progress, the unified community absorbed into one powerful emotional force, moving proudly and inexorably into the future, willing everything to be better in a place where dreams come true. Passage to more than India.

It must be said that Van Wyck Brooks was not comfortable with this liberal formulation until quite late in life. I think there was a connection between his uneasiness with this view and his extended mental and emotional breakdown which lasted through much of the 1920's and part of the 30's. I find none of the explanations offered for it convincing in the slightest, least of all his alleged agony over his book on Henry James. I think the crisis was spiritual—based on religious concerns and precipitated by the strong opposition of his first wife to Van Wyck's interest in Catholicism. The material relevant to this topic in Nelson's biography is new to me, and I do not know how much more of it there may be in his papers. Nelson feels that he would have become a convert but for Eleanor Stimson's opposition. In any event, after his marriage it was a "forbidden subject." Brooks's "religious sensibilities continued to exacerbate his emotional troubles." As a young man he felt that he could "abide only in Rome or Rationality." The price of domestic peace was Rationality. Was he perceiving the bankruptcy of liberalism and the folly of his choice? The trauma he underwent was formidable. His whole past demanded that he choose Rationality quite deliberately during his crisis. He made himself become arbitrarily and firmly indifferent to all transcendental terms. Secular humanism was his choice: "There is only one world, and we had better make the best of it. Our only

Liberal Culture

America, America . . .

A declared fellow traveler and unabashed procommunist, the Greek cinematographer Costa-Gavras has made an openly anti-American movie, one that is fiercely hateful of the American sociopolitical system. He made his movie in America, using American money. He then received the resounding acclaim of so-called liberal—but still American—critics, and he packed American movie houses (mostly with American haters of America). Finally, his American star, who plays the part of an American who is corrosively disenchanted with the American government, is reverentially received in real life by the American President in the American White House—the symbol of American statehood.

All this isn't so bad, considering the history of American self-abuse with which America has survived for centuries, and which makes it nonetheless the perpetual dream of all the poor people on earth who wish to escape the communist paradises for the wretched, the needy and the destitute. Self-flagellation was always the favorite American pastime, and that habit of self-abasement has become in our time more and more an object of shoddy manipulation—the most obvious intention of Mr. Costa-Gavras. His easy victim is rudimentary good sense.

To make the matter clear, one must put *Missing*, the movie in quesion, into a certain perspective. Mr. Costa-Gavras made an earlier movie about the heinousness of right-wing dictatorships, and we had little quarrel with his condemnation of them, although its tone was that of a defeated KGB agent rather than that of a true lover of freedom. Then he made a movie in which he condemned Stalinist corruption as detrimental to the decent, much-abused, humane idea of communism—mankind's best hope. We detested that movie: not a single sequence of it or word in it attested to the fundamental structural attrocity of the political reality of Marxism-Leninism—as Costa-Gavras saw it, some mean people had soiled the ideal, which remains as sacrosanct as ever. How the communist state has martyrized societies and annihilated humanness all around the world since Stalin was not mentioned.

Now Mr. Gavras has made a movie in which the structural evil of a freely elected government, i.e. the American political system, is allegedly bared. His point is not that Americans may commit mistakes (like the unreasonable, overidealistic Stalinists) but that the very core of our statehood is a source of abomination. The fact that he freely sells his movie in America means nothing to him. In older, better, days guests like Mr. Costa-Gavras were kicked out onto the street. In the decaying America of our time, he is fawned upon as a celebrity and included on the liberal cocktail-party circuit in L.A. and New York. And his star lunches in Washington, D.C. with the chief executive of this symbol of wickedness—the battered idea of American democracy. □

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chance. Anything else is evasion, mythology or self-deception,—*get all spirituality into it.*" Good is in man and is not to be found anywhere else. His own identity was such a precarious thing, he was afraid of losing it in Catholicism. Much is revealed by his intense hatred for T.S. Eliot: why, for instance, did he consider him "a demonic anti-self"?

Looking now at the whole of his achievement, I can say that many of the virtues perceived earlier were real. It was a gracious work; the writing was elegant. The gentility of the man of letters, so like Ruskin, was reflected in it. It was a confident work, not marred on the whole by annoying mannerisms. And it was serious, almost ponderous with the passage of time, but American literature needed to be treated seriously then. Unfortunately, his limitations now appear as evident as his virtues. He disliked the new criticism, which became the most important critical movement of the first half of the century, principally because he resented its success and influence. It was a challenge to the acceptance and appreciation of his own work. In his own work he failed to understand and to distinguish between major voices that transcend an age and minor voices that only bespeak an age. Not understanding this made every writer seem to be of approximately the same importance. Nevertheless, he had favorites, but could not justify them since they were picked on the basis of their being either especially American or especially spokesmen for Brooks's values. Their literary merits were of little consequence. For reasons already suggested he could not understand what was going on in the work of the important writers of the 20th century, and, as a result, he could not be fair to them. His criticism was all too creative when he put together various writers' work with his own, sometimes giving the reader a misleading impression of the point being made. With respect to the artistic value of American writers, he chose the wrong side in what Nelson calls "the mortal combat" between "Tory and democrat." His confused liberalism aged badly. He could not understand or adequately respond to the writer who wrestled with evil as a necessary aspect of the human condition. The past filled with the half-truths he constructed from his bias was not such a usable past after all. It did not even tell the more important part of the story since it failed to recognize the tragic view of life, the view which is, after all, at the base of the great literature of the West.

It is proper for Professor Nelson to have written this book and for E.P. Dutton, Brooks's long-time publisher, to issue it. Brooks is, paradoxically enough, part of a usable past. The biography can do nothing, however, to reconstruct his influence or to make his theory better than it was. He was lucky that he had as much influence as he did for over 30 years. That will have to be enough. It is.

Ain't He Sweet?

Tom Wolfe: *From Bauhaus to Our House;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York.

by Leopold Tyrmand

Substituting the adjective "sweet" with the word "right" touches the essence of Mr. Wolfe's minitract, or maxi-pamphlet, the past season's best-selling, passionately discussed, reviewed, admired and denounced book on feelings about modern architecture. It is also about the manipulation of architectural creeds and aesthetic ideologies, their fratricidal warfare, personal hatreds and holy conflicts of opinion. Is he right, Mr. Wolfe, about what he believes in and pronounces with his usual ingratiating flair? Actually, rightness is beside the point. An immutable value resides in his very divagation, in the methodology and dialectics with which he treats the nature of an intellectual dialogue (monologue?) on the state of the arts, their contemporary interaction with daily life, social questions and the cultural climates of our time. Thus what Mr. Wolfe performs is an act of speculative vibrancy which results in the unmistakably Wolfe-ish reportorial intellectuality that rings charmingly and possesses an inimitable rightness of tone. Right or wrong aside, he is sweet, Mr. Wolfe, to my ears, and he flavors my reaction to his assumptions and inferences—many of which seem to me downright *in*correct—with intense pleasure. In the end, as one reads him it makes little difference if he's misleading or inaccurate—some mysterious quality in his approach restrains us from making even those distinctions.

In spite of all these powers of appeal, it must be said that this time Mr. Wolfe, our favorite nonconformist, has not scored a *Volltreffer,* a direct hit, as he did with *The Painted Word,* where his central concern was irrefutable. In that book, the audacity of his idea was grounded in a strong tradition of a *coup de grâce* meted out to the quite-obvious nakedness of a dimwitted emperor. But architecture and the arts are not exactly the same: the former is art and something more—an ingredient that seems to elude Mr. Wolfe in his soliloquy. Architecture ingrains itself differently into perceptive sensitivities, and it lends itself less to the coining of interpretations that are divorced from its fundamental staying power (which is unmeasurable by short-term standards). Mr. Wolfe's judgments of Le Corbusier may prove to be correct a hundred years from now, but they also may be seen as totally obsolete; we just do not know. Insisting too strongly on an accuracy of opinions is a dangerous intellectual game: one may wind up looking like a literary stand-up comic, something far below Mr. Wolfe's

Mr. Tyrmand, editor of Chronicles of Culture, *studied architecture briefly at l'Academie des Beaux-Arts in Paris.*

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talents and aspirations. After all, he is a man who strives for that formula of elegance which can be derived only from a secret mixture of self-assurance and self-deprecation—the quintessence of Style. In *Bauhaus,* Mr. Wolfe is sometimes on target in his pursuit of that elegance, but often he is not—which I deplore, for he *is* one of my most-preferred presences in today's cultural landscape. He correctly punctuates the modern arts' original sins—their bonds with totalitarian ideologies, their mental slaveries, their pomposities that pass for idealism—but his polemical thrust occasionally suffers from indulgences of a skewed argument. It is improper to leave out the warmth of art nouveau, the sensuousness and sinuousness of Secession, but it serves Mr. Wolfe well to ignore them. He does not dwell sufficiently on the relationship between the modern arts' depersonalization and their wicked, antibourgeois absolutism. His choice of criteria and their practical application brings him dangerously close to socialist realism's ukases: in the end, it's as hard to extrapolate aesthetic canons from popular taste as it is to obtain them from demented bureaucratic communist precepts. Wolfe tiptoes toward the status of the chief American anti-European—a healthy chauvinism to my mind, but not where it is most needed, namely, in politics. (Let's hope this will come; what is necessary *now* to say about Europeans is that they have squandered their own civilizational treasure—their sense of heroic commitment to rationality—which makes them behave like sheep both in the arts and elsewhere.) Finally, he has yet to convince me, with a precise quotation, that Dostoyevsky said "ideas have consequences," as he claims on page 15; to the best of my knowledge, it was the eminent American philosopher of culture, Richard Weaver of University of Chicago fame, who constructed that phrase.

Thus the main problem with Mr. Wolfe's subtle views of architecture is that one is not certain whether to accept them at face value or as *bon mots.* And which is the most desirable aim for a creative intellectual: to emote a lasting perception, a lasting verbal synthesis or a lasting truth? Much can be said about the possible dissections of the semantic, cognitive and analytical worth of Wolfe's "radical chic," the "me generation" or "the right stuff"—but these phrases have influenced contemporary cultural ambiances, are mightily alive in the realm of language and are here to stay. After all, is "to be or not to be," or "there are things on earth . . ." more or less of a literary achievement than *Hamlet's* impact on the literature of torment and guilt? It would be hard to say, but the immediacy and clarity of a *mot juste* may be the most substantial contribution. And that's what is missing from *Bauhaus.* As we all know, it is difficult to produce a flawless intellectual provocation, a classy stunt on a tightrope stretched between fact and interpretation, an effort to make people bark at one another and, at the same time, be hailed as the grand *observateur.* Mr. Wolfe's argument is that the modal concept of the alleged modernity of architecture was conceived in Europe and imposed on the American culture by the impure tyranny of fashion, and that America, as a nation, hated it and rebelled against it. He seems unaware of the fact that, from the turn of the century until World War II, European architects who preached constructivism, functionalism and formalism were vehemently denounced as promoters of American technological simplism, faceless industrialization, the mass-manufactured Americanization of ancient city landscapes. The universe of cubes, lines and planes was abhorred as demeaningly American. Mr. Wolfe himself loses track of the consistency of fairness: he winces at the curvilinearism of Mendelsohn's Einstein Tower—admittedly a Gaudi-like grotesquerie—but he sees no echoes of it in the curvilinear concept of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum.

I made my choice between syncretism and fantasy, or eclecticism and tolerance, long ago. It was on the Rue Vaugirard in Paris where I saw for the first time, within a neatly composed row of 17th-century townhouses, a gleaming glass-and-steel structure by someone from the Corbu school. I liked it. □

The City of God & Man

Malachi Martin: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church;* G.P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

by Ellen Wilson

Edward Gibbon's monumental study of the decline of the Roman Empire argued that Christianity contributed to Rome's collapse. In Malachi Martin's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Church,* the Empire strikes back: Martin shows that the great false step of the papacy was the acceptance of Constantine's patronage and the consequent contamination of the Church of God by the things of Caesar. From the time of Pope Sylvester—when the newly Christianized Constantine began to load the Church with the trappings of a state religion—to the present, when, in Martin's view, John Paul II is negotiating the Church's passage from a disintegrating Western order to a post-Western universal technocracy, there has been a litany of botched opportunities and progressive decay.

The "hope" Martin holds out is that, when the transition is completed and the world is managed by godless technocrats, when religion is no longer a partner to the counsels of the mighty and no longer informs the consciences of those who oc-

Miss Wilson is the author of An Even Dozen.

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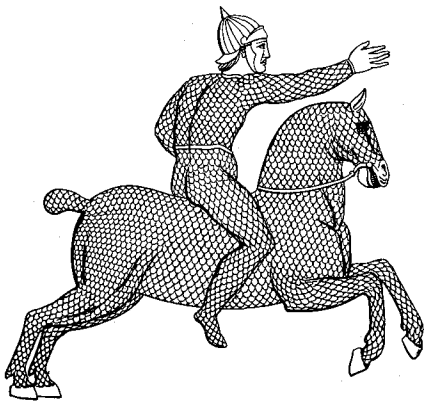
cupy the seats of power, *then* the Church will return to the witness-bearing purity of her earliest days, a time when martyrdom was the usual outcome of an ecclesiastical career.

One should not underestimate the strength of his case: every student of Church history can produce his own examples of the Church's collusion with the City of Man. And Martin—whose novels, *The Final Conclave* and *King of Kings,* demonstrate his fascination with scene-painting and dramatic encounter—pulls out all the stops in chapters that read like a script for an ecclesiastical docudrama: popes rivaling Satan in pride and Sodom in debauchery; papal murders and kidnappings; medieval torture presented with a pathologist's scrupulous detail. There are poignant deathbed scenes of popes in exile, popes in prison, popes broken by the collapse of worldly schemes of conquest and power. *I, Claudius* cannot match it.

The format is simple: each chapter describes an aborted opportunity for the occupant of Peter's chair to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, renouncing once and for all temporal power and influence. It is *The Shoes of the Fisherman* replayed in different settings amid shifting alignments of worldly power.

Martin dispenses his own brand of high-grade Irish blarney, and he cannot write a dull book. But there are grave problems with this one which fall into two categories. First, the New Journalism novelization of history leaves one to wonder how much is true and how much is creative writing. Much is clearly fabricated: most of the dialogue; the long internal soliloquies of popes, bishops and kings; perhaps some of the machinations of the papal elections as well. And some of what purports to be straight history is inaccurate or misleading: Martin consistently downplays the role of theological differences in religious controversies, sentimentalizes the history of religious minorities like the Palestinian Christians and the Albigensians, and commits out-and-out bloopers, as in dating some of the early Church Fathers after the papacy of Leo the Great.

But the larger question, and the greater difficulty, concerns the thesis of Martin's book. That there have been corrupt and myopic bishops and popes no one denies. That they have done Christianity incalculable harm is a painful—and shameful—truth. But the route from these observations to Martin's conclusion that the City of God and the City of Man can and must be cleanly divided is not syllogistic. Spiritual pride and ambition corrupt just as surely as their temporal counterparts, and confining clergy



to a purely spiritual role would not necessarily ensure pious and edifying clergy. Martin's book is marred by his nostalgic romanticization of the age of the Christian martyrs. He turns away from the sorry compromises of Western Christianity to prophesy another age of Christian martyrdom.

An all-or-nothing attitude toward Christian commitment is not only understandable, but also admirable. The West has reached the dead end of liberal pluralism, a largely secular culture espousing values antithetical to Christianity and pursuing goals incompatible with the Christian life. The moral perils of what cocktail-party hostesses call "mingling" are obvious: the immoderate desire to fit in, to "pass" as a normal product of one's time. In reaction to the increased pressure to conform, we have seen the opposite response in recent years: Christians tend to huddle together for warmth in shared opposition to the World. The emergence of the Moral Majority and the proliferation of private religious schools are two examples of this trend. How far one should go in this direction is a matter of judgment and circumstances. But there are no easy distinctions between the City of God and the City of Man. How should the early Church have responded to a barbarian Europe? Should it have withdrawn into Graeco-Roman purity and taken up permanent residence in the catacombs? Should it have labored patiently to break off a convert or two from the Goth or Vandal hordes? Or should it have acted as it did—tackling the conversion of entire tribes and nations, which at that time necessarily entailed the conversion of their rulers? And if this last choice was the proper one, or even an acceptable one, wasn't some degree of political entanglement inevitable? Such an inquiry attempts simply to understand the context in which the Church's worldly sins were committed. How else could Christianity have been conveyed to the post-Roman world? The Scriptures, the creeds, the writings of the Fathers, the hymns and liturgies had to be shared with the Germans and Slavs and Angles and Saxons; the treasury of ancient civilization had to be shared.

Religion is transmitted through culture, whether native or acquired; this is true even though, as Christopher Dawson has pointed out, civilizations run the risk of identifying religion with culture. Any religion which claims universality and wishes to transcend its origins must work out the difficult questions this entails. The relations of church and state, the boundary lines of secular and religious, are merely one part of the greater question of the relationship of religion to life.

At times Martin seems to accommodate some of these complexities, but his novelistic presentation, his fondness for catalogues of horrors, his desire for a hierarchy fully detached from the world, render him impatient with compromise and

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intolerant of errors of judgment. He presents each of his popes with the Great Choice, permits most of them some transitory glimpse of the truth, and then calls in human pride and "historical necessity" to explain the great refusal. In the process historical contexts, errors of judgment and moral corruption are all confounded. The temptation to judge and condemn much of the Church's history testifies to a healthy hunger for simplicity and *holiness* in a church which too often betrays its mission. But the temptation has its darker side. When the early Church emerged from her first great period of persecution and determined that penitent apostates could be readmitted into full communion with the faithful, she chose to become the Church of sinners as well as saints; she strove to follow the example of her Founder, who dined with publicans and forgave Peter's triple denial. That decision made the moral contamination of the hierarchy (not to mention the laity) virtually inevitable. The Roman Catholic doctrine of infallibility is less a proud boast than a desperate divine expedient. It is a concession to weakness, the supernatural supplement to what, in the best and wisest of us, remains a flawed nature.

Outside that narrow circle of security, all hell may literally break loose, with the spiritual authority contaminating the temporal, or vice versa. To baptize and confess and marry and bury the king is to affect, or attempt to affect, his morals and his conduct; there is no impassable wall, no watertight dike between church and state, between the king's confessor and the king's subjects. This does not let institutional religions off the hook, but, on the contrary, imposes on them a dilemma as insoluble as it is unavoidable, which is manifested in a succession of razor-thin decisions.

The alternative—a declaration of war against the World—cannot be chosen, but only accepted if it is imposed. Western Christians note the hardiness of Christians in communist countries, contrasting their unambiguous witness with our own on-again-off-again love affair with the world. But there is another side to religion in Russia or Hungary or Rumania: Dmitry Mikheyev, in an article in *National Review,* reminds us: "fame produces its own 'natural selection'; we know only the dozens of victors and forget that thousands, tens of thousands, did not survive. They were broken, and they perished." This is where the romance of life in the catacombs ends for too many—not in the martyr's palm of victory but in the despair of the apostate and the timeserver. If our generation, or our children's generation, ever faces something of the kind, we must hope for the grace of fortitude. But in the West, the present task of Christians is still to be *in* this world, though not of it. In this age of campaigning priests, revolutionary nuns and Marxist bishops, Malachi Martin's denunciation of the church's involvement in politics is a salutary and well-earned rebuke. But his prescription for purity sounds worse than the disease. Though the middle ground must be negotiated with care, the extremes can be located with some degree of certainty by anyone except disciples of liberation theology. One need not embrace capitalism or Wilsonian democracy to perceive the incompatibility of communism and Christianity. The lessons of history should be learned, but this does not mean we can escape from history. For one of the implications of an incarnate God is that all matters are in some sense religious, but not all are matters with which religious authority should deal. □

Stories With & Without Character

Richard Yates: *Liars in Love;* Delacorte Press / Seymour Lawrence; New York.

Damon Runyon: *The Bloodhounds of Broadway and Other Stories;* William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Richard Vigilante

Who is Jill Krementz? I know her only as "Photograph © 1981 by Jill Krementz" which I see everywhere. I don't follow photography and couldn't name another photographer except Mathew Brady. But I know her. She takes the authors' book-jacket photographs for *all* the books published by respectable publishers. She's a monopoly. Not that I wish to criticize Miss Krementz's photography. She is a wonderful photographer. In fact, she is a bit dangerous —a sort of "seat perilous" among photographers. Even in a format as lowly as the publicity photo she reveals souls. A writer who is not of the purest of heart and allows her to do his book jacket runs a terrible risk.

Mr. Vigilante is a free-lance writer in Alexandria, Virginia.

It was only after I had read Richard Yates's collection of stories, *Liars in Love,* that I noticed his picture on the back of the book, taken by Miss Krementz, of course. It is a head shot in every sense of the word. Yates's head looks *huge* in the picture, and fills most of it. The head sort of hangs down from his shoulders as if it is just too huge to be supported, even by a body which looks in itself to be pretty substantial. The hugeness of the head is augmented by a whiskery white beard, groomed just carefully enough to go with a tweed jacket or an old blazer, which is what Yates is wearing. His mustache is cut so as to frame his mouth into an expression of restrained yet deep regret, as a clown's makeup *around* the mouth often seems to give the mouth itself a sad expression. But in this case Yates's mouth is very slightly upturned so that without the mustache he would be wearing a slight smile. As it is he appears simultaneously happy and sad as, we must imagine, all wise men are.

But Yates's eyes are the important

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thing. You really see nothing else at first glance, so well is the picture composed. They occupy the precise center of the photograph. And why not? The eyes after all are the windows of the soul, and oh what a soul we have here. The lighting is perfect, the shadows around the eyes incredibly deep and dark so that the eyes themselves shine out by contrast. And what eyes, warm and knowing—but how pained they are, as if they had seen far too much. Still we see that the pain is not for Yates but for us. And though the pain they have seen might have made another pair of eyes want to stop seeing, these eyes are still willing to see. But now they see by their own interior light so that they shine out even from those deep, deep shadows.

One last detail. Mr. Yates does not face the camera head on. The right side of his head is angled slightly back and away from the camera. This does a curious thing to his right eye. That eye appears to be the expression of a wholly separate part of Mr. Yates's mind. The eye seems a bit more open, brighter anyway, than the deep, sad, left eye. The eyebrow appears to sweep up and back, almost, but not quite, as if he were raising it for comic effect. If the left eye is the sad, compassionate eye focused lovingly on us and all our troubles, the right eye is the laughing, ironical, all-knowing eye which sees the whole world at once and knows the vanity of all things. But the eyes do not clash. It is as if the ironic right eye, precisely because it sees all, validates the compassion of the left eye. Yes, our sorrows *do* matter even while Yates, who is no mere saint but a philosopher also, realizes that we are but dust in the wind.

In short this is the picture of a man who has practiced all his life to be a pompous bore—the type who sees himself as compassionate and understanding and who spends his life dispensing generalized compassion and the second-rate conventional wisdoms of his own age. In Yates's case these are dispensed in stories calculated to be devoid of any interest or excitement so that the narrator can retain his twin poses of philosophical detachment and—because dull stories have no villains—compassion for everything that moves.

Yates's stories aren't really short stories at all. They are outlines for failed novels masquerading as vignettes. They ended up as longish short stories because, like so many contemporary writers, Yates hasn't enough patience to get to the good parts—i.e. the parts where the author gets to beat home his trite profundities with a sledgehammer. But Yates doesn't seem to realize that by treating a short story as a condensed novel he loses everything that can be wonderful about this neglected genre. Thus he tries to develop, usually through banal microcosms, the entire life stories of his characters. He is ignorant, of course, of the simple truth that a good short-story writer uses a compact plot to reveal just those few essences of character that burn themselves into the reader's heart and make both character and story worth remembering.

"Joseph I'm So Tired" is about the narrator's mother, who is an art bum: she is divorced, living on alimony with her two children in Greenwich Village and pretending to be a sculptress. What is supposed to be the plot involves her efforts to be the first sculptor to do Franklin Roosevelt's bust. She succeeds, but the whole incident absorbs about four pages scattered through a 33-page story which meanders on and on after the plot is resolved. There is an overfull cast of characters who, because they are shamefully manipulated by the author, appear overdeveloped. They all reveal themselves in one or more subplots, like trite tragedies of adolescence or adult self-deception. For instance, a child impales a goldfish with an arrow while trying to show how much he knows about goldfish, and then the character disappears. It is possible to write a wonderful story about a child accidently killing a pet. But if the incident takes only a few paragraphs, after which both killer and goldfish disappear forever, we suspect the author of manipulating our feelings to make us think something is happening. But nothing ever does happen, and even more important, no one ever changes. What's worse, the fact that the story never goes anywhere seems to be deliberate. The interplay of self-deception and ennui seems to be Yates's big message.

"... as fine as anything Yates has written."
—*New York Times Book Review*

The best of the lot is "Trying Out for the Race," best in this case meaning that a failed attempt to make something happen is better than no attempt at all. A divorced mother who supports herself and her nine-year-old daughter by writing newspaper features decides to share a house with a friend who is also divorced and living with her own 13-year-old daughter and nine-year-old son. That's the plot: twenty-seven pages about the divorcée's postdivorce love life, through which we come to know that she is *honest* with herself: "Self-deception is an illness," we are told. Then we meet the friend, who is in advanced stages of "self-deception."

Rust Hills, who has a head on his shoulders, once explained that a short story is different from a sketch because "a short story tells of something that happened to someone . . . A story . . . is dynamic rather than static: the same thing *cannot* happen again. A character is capable of being moved, and *is* moved, no matter in how slight a way." It is precisely movement which is lacking in Yates's dreary and didactic character sketches. And if the characters aren't moved the reader won't be. A short story writer *does* work within rather confining limits. About the most he can do is to sharpen the reader's vision a bit by dwelling on those few unique aspects of a character which cause him to do a certain thing in a certain way at a certain time. But this is sufficiently interesting both for lovers of stories and students of

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human nature. Of course some great writers can do more—perhaps paint an entire life into a few pages. But genuises are even more rare than writers of good stories—and it doesn't pay to play at being a genius if you are not.

Damon Runyon was no genius, but he wrote wonderful stories. One of the most endearing things about Runyon is that, in the middle of the Depression, he got paid a dollar a word for these stories and sold batches of them. That may be the very heart of what's good about his writing. In the introduction by Tom Clark we hear Runyon saying:

> My measure of success is money. I have no interest in artistic triumphs that are financial losers. I would like to have an artistic success that also made money, of course, but if I had to make a choice between the two, I would take the dough.

What an American. And it is exactly the Americanness of these stories that is their greatest appeal. We are short on folklore in America, being so young. Since we grew into modernity before much of our premodern folklore had a chance to take root, we have even less than we might. What does Johnny Appleseed have to do with our America? Even Paul Bunyan, big and American as he is, doesn't have a really strong claim on us. Runyon wrote a lot of splendid folklore of a type I don't think we will ever lose. The America Runyon writes about is postfrontier, a lot more closed-in and interdependent than the country in which our infant folklore developed. But the Americans in his stories go at this closed-in existence with the same free-wheeling ingenious opportunism that became part of the national character on the frontier. Runyon once said of an acquaintance, "What this fellow does is the best he can, but the field, being slightly overcrowded is none too well. It is a very crowded profession these days." That's the modern, urbanized, industrialized, hard-times version of the frontier spirit, the only version most Americans can experience these days.

Most of the heroes and heroines of Runyon's folklore have a somewhat relaxed attitude toward the law. This is not to suggest that the essence of the American character is criminal, but rather that this posture versus conventions is a moral instinct which may be at the basis of any great thing we may achieve as leader of the free world. Runyon's characters are *American* heroes because they know instinctively, without a trace of ideology, without a touch of Marxism, that a lot of what passes for morals is only mores. And a lot of what gets promoted as mores is really just some segment of society trying to run things to suit its own interests. Because Americans know these things instinctively, they will never be impressed by an ideology that makes a big deal about revealing them. A real American won't lecture a hypocritical millionaire about class warfare. He'll just tell the millionaire to blow it out his ear.

My favorite story in this folklore vein is "The Lacework Kid," written during World War II. Its Americanness stands out all the more clearly because it is set in Germany, in a POW camp.

In his prewar, Broadway, incarnation, the Lacework Kid was a professional card player, that is, a shark, adept at dealing from the bottom of the deck, palming cards and all the other tricks of the trade. But Runyon doesn't say this directly—he never treats his heroes so indelicately:

> He has long slim white hands like a society broad and in fact there is no doubt that his hands are the secret of the Lacework Kid's success at his trade of card playing as they are fast and flexible and have youth in them, and youth is the one thing a good card player must have, because age stiffens fingers up more than somewhat. But of course age is a drawback in everything in this wicked old world.

This indirection is part of Runyon's humor. But the real reason he won't say it more directly is that he wants us to realize that it needn't be said—every "professional" card player, on Broadway at least, is a shark. The implication is that the Kid, despite the demands of his profession, is not a moral outcast.

The war comes and the Kid, a gunner on a B-29, is shot down and taken prisoner. It turns out that the commandant of the POW camp spent many years in America as a diplomatic attaché and developed a passion for American gin rummy. He is desperate for someone to play. The Kid, like any serious card player, thinks gin is a game for idiots. "Schultz [he tells the sergeant of the guard] nearly everybody in the United States of America plays gin rummy. The little children in the street play it. Old broads play it. I understand there is a trained ape in the Bronx Zoo that plays it very nicely and I am not surprised, because . . . I can teach any dumb animal to play gin rummy if I can get it to hold ten cards." Gin was Runyon's favorite game.

Nevertheless, the camp guards, headed by the sergeant, convince the Kid to play the commandant for money, with the guards staking the Kid. All these arrangements are made in a wonderfully American dialect which stands out like a sore thumb in the German setting. The sergeant tells his fellow guards that the Kid can make "a Jack jump out of the deck and sing Chattanooga Choo-Choo if necessary." After explaining to the Kid that he will get 25 percent of the winnings the German guard tells him "I will personally guarantee your end." What can be more American than "your end" unless it is "a piece of the action"?

Of course the Kid bankrupts the commandant and, indirectly, every one of the guards because the commandant forces them to loan him money so he can keep playing. Pretty soon the Kid is the only person in camp with any money. The commandant appears to commit suicide, and the Kid uses his winnings to bribe the guards to turn their backs while the prisoners escape. The Kid gets a medal and returns to Broadway to tell the story at Mindy's.

What better way to beat the nazis and

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their murderous national honor than to cheat them at cards and bribe them with their own money? It's too bad Miss Krementz wasn't taking pictures when Runyon was alive and looking us straight in our eyes. □

The Magic & Power of Words

Borges: A Reader: A Selection from the Writings of Jorge Luis Borges; **edited by Emir Rodriguez Monegal and Alastair Reid; E.P. Dutton; New York.**

Italo Calvino: *If on a winter's night a traveler;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; New York.

by Carson Daly

Together, the *Borges Reader* (edited by Emir Monegal and Alastair Reid) and Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* offer an excellent opportunity to scrutinize what the major writers of the modern world are up to. Both the Argentine and the Italian are literary heavyweights who have thoroughly mastered the craft and who have influenced readers, imitators and critics. Borges has written so many essays, poems, parodies, novels and detective stories that his myriad decorations, degrees and accolades rival the number of works for which he has received them. Calvino, not yet so famous as Borges, is "a recognized master of allegorical fantasy."

The *Borges Reader* is informative and serviceable, containing poetry as well as short fictional sketches, essays and prose selections. Some readers, of course, will be pleased to have such a variety of Borges's works conveniently anthologized in one volume, while others will cavil at the omissions necessary to achieve such a goal. The real interest of this *Reader,* however, lies neither in the specific inclusions nor in the general exclusions, but in the attitude toward language which Borges evinces in all of his texts. As one critic remarked: "For Borges books and men are consubstantial, and the world and the Word are only a letter apart. By imagining (as he often does) stories to be true, and truth a story, Borges seeks to secure for himself an immortality somewhat more literal than most writers aspire to. No other writer so desperately wants to become a book, none is so concerned for his shelf-life."

These words suggest two facets of Borges's attitude toward language. First, he relishes the artificial disguised as the authentic and the real masquerading as the fake because they enable him to create his own reality. In so doing, Borges attributes to language the power of an absolute which simultaneously reveals and conceals. Second, he manipulates the revelatory and the mysterious through language, attempting to be more than an author. By his fiction disguised as fact he is vying for the positions of a linguistic high priest, of a magician practicing semantic *legerdemain,* of a god conferring reality and unreality, mortality and immortality.

Borges reveals himself in several of these guises in the *Reader.* In his "Preface to the Unending Rose," for example, he says, "The word must have been in the beginning a magic symbol, which the usury of time wore out. The mission of the poet should be to restore to the word, at least in a partial way, its primitive and secret force." Borges tracks this primitive and secret force in order to convey it in his own writing, to penetrate the true meaning of the words he finds elsewhere. Probably one of the most intriguing stories in the *Reader,* "The Handwriting of God," focuses on this search. The imprisoned narrator—a magician who is the last of an order of priests of an unnamed god—spends years trying to fathom the symbolic message that the god is trying to send him before he finally realizes that the god had confided "his message to the living skin of the jaguar" in the cell next to his. The priest devotes more years to learning the configuration of the spots, fixing in his mind the "black forms running through the yellow fur." In trying to decipher this code, he is confronted with the question which intrigues Borges: "What type of sentence . . . will an absolute mind construct? . . . A god, I reflected, ought to utter only a single word and in that word absolute fullness." Finally, he deciphers the divine formula and, in so doing, experiences that which transcends language but, paradoxically, he who can now read "the handwriting of God" refuses to decipher it for others because he has passed out of the realm of language into the ineffable: "But I know I shall never say those words . . . Whoever has seen the universe, whoever has beheld the fiery designs of the universe, cannot

Dr. Daly is professor of English at the University of Notre Dame.

Comments by Ronald Reagan, Edwin J. Feulner, William F. Buckley, Jr., Jacques Barzun, Milton Friedman, Russell Kirk, Willard C. Butcher, Philip M. Crane, Tom Wolfe and more . . .

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think of one man, of that man's trivial fortunes or misfortunes, though he be that very man." Borges wants to decipher words and language as a means of reaching the ultimate meaning behind them, but he realizes that to penetrate this realm would be to arrive at a silence beyond the power of man to create or to fathom.

The possibilities afforded by words and language are also the focus of Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler.* In fact, the book has no plot, characterization, dialogue or narration apart from the subject of reading and language. The unnamed narrator is himself a reader who has just purchased and is reading Calvino's book. This reader-narrator's attempts to read the novel, however, are perpetually interrupted by stories within the text. As a result of purported publishing errors, wrongly labeled manuscripts and other anomalies, he ends up reading the beginning of ten different stories—each of which stops at its most climactic point. The frustrated narrator-reader goes to the library to check out all ten books, but none is available. Instead, he is consoled by several other bibliomaniacs who offer him their own theories on the nature of reading: the first says that the purpose of reading is to refer one to the outside world as yet another kind of text to interpret. The second replies that the text itself will reveal a "new discovery among the folds of the sentence." The third proposes that at every rereading a book changes, since the reader himself has changed. The fourth asserts that everything he reads belongs only to one volume—parts of his tome of collected readings. The fifth finds in books a reminder of the primordial myth which all literary works vaguely echo. The sixth reads for beginnings and for the promise contained in every *"incipit."* The seventh searches in conclusions for the unwritten, ultimate conclusion which they all prefigure. Finally, the narrator-reader-author reveals his own theory of reading:

> Gentlemen, first I must say that in books I like to read only what is written, and to connect the details with the whole, and to consider certain readings as definitive; and I like to keep one book distinct from the other, each for what it has that is different and new; and I especially like books to be read from beginning to end. For a while now, everything has been going wrong for me: it seems to me that in the world there now exist only stories that remain suspended or get lost along the way.

Such desires seem ironic since Calvino gratifies none of them; the author is interested only in the ways in which literature can function independent of the author, the reader, even the text. Throughout *If on a winter's night a traveler,* he investigates these possibilities and touches briefly on some modern critical approaches to reading. Among these are the nationalist questions involved in the usage of language; the inevitability of errors in translation; the political implications of texts; the problems posed by textural interruptions resulting from artistic crises; the threat posed to authentic literary pieces by apocrypha; the status of diaries written by those of questionable sanity; the computer analysis of books as a mode of criticism; the feminist approach to texts. Mixed with these are questions concerning the status of life and art, bizarre scenarios of censorship, the terrorist aspect of literature and literary attempts to abolish nature in favor of the abstract. All these are relevant and entertaining, but what is at stake goes beyond either relevance or entertainment.

All these approaches to language reveal that Calvino, like Borges, is intrigued with the word and entranced with the very fiction he parodies. Like the authors he depicts, Calvino seeks the "ideal reader" who is passionately devoted to reading, driven by an insatiable thirst to discover the ultimate story. Calvino himself has fallen under the spell and says: "The novel I would most like to read at this moment . . . should have as its driving force only the desire to narrate, to pile stories upon stories, without trying to impose a philosophy of life on you." But he must know that all stories impose a philosophy—even if it is achieved only by its purported absence.

The implicit philosophy in Calvino's novel is not, as one might expect, that all stories are only nonsensical fragments, but rather that all stories contain magic and power—even if they are incomplete, mistranslated or parodic. In fact, Calvino's book seems to bear witness to the fact that even the nonsensical, incomplete and fragmented has meaning—that the written word always contains some seed of truth. As a fictional head of censorship says, "I have understood my limitations. . . . In reading, something happens over which I have no power. . . . We can prevent reading: but in the decree that forbids reading there will still be something of the truth that we would wish never to be read." It is this truth for which Calvino searches and which Borges seeks. Each recognizes that his stories are part of a still-greater story, that every work of art is, in a sense, unfinished because the ultimate dénouement has yet to be staged. Some might assert that such a credo gives way to writing in which no conclusions are reached, narrative flow is constantly interrupted, dialogue is fragmentary and the point of view is parodic, suggesting that these features rob literature of its meaning and make a travesty of both words and story. But, ultimately, it is impossible for words to mean nothing; the modern writer's experimentation with language is not a desecration but a testimony to its indestructibility.

Borges's and Calvino's playing with words indicates not their contempt for language, but their awe. Like ancient man, these modern writers believe that there is a word that creates and calls existence into being, one which explains, embodies and saves. Implicit in everything these men write is their hope of stumbling upon this absolute word which will enable them finally to write in "the handwriting of God." □

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Noble Liberalism

Alain Besançon: *The Rise of the Gulag: Intellectual Origins of Leninism;* Continuum; New York.

by Lee Congdon

By now it is commonplace that intellectuals routinely succumb to the totalitarian temptation, chiefly from the left. Over and over again they have served as apologists for tyrannies that advertise their commitment to Marxism-Leninism, prating about the villainous character of Western "bourgeois" democracy. Since the end of World War II, the Parisian intelligentsia has played a particularly prominent role in this unedifying drama, not least because of the presence of Jean Paul Sartre, the most celebrated French intellectual since Voltaire, who graduated from philosophic nihilism to idiosyncratic Marxism. Although he always maintained a certain distance from the French Communist Party, Sartre did much to create an atmosphere in which hatred of the West and sympathy for the Soviet Union, China and Third World "Marxist" regimes constituted qualifying credentials for admission to the community of advanced thinkers. Aspiring undergraduates and Left Bank habitués pondered his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* and awaited eagerly each new *pronunciamiento* in *Les Temps Modernes.* And for those who preferred more philosophic rigor, there was always Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a man of undeniable gift who in 1947 published a defense of Stalin's purges that he entitled *Humanism and Terror,* without intending any irony.

There were, of course, some who refused to be swept along by the Marxist current; one thinks of men as different as Jacques Maritain, Jacques Ellul and Albert Camus. But when the intellectual history of postwar France is finally written, one man will stand out from the rest for his tireless and brilliant defense of the liberal West—I mean Raymond Aron. An assimilated Jew who was Sartre's classmate at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, Aron has done more than any other French thinker, perhaps than any European thinker, of his time to prevent the flame of liberty from being extinguished. He represents the very best of the great liberal tradition, by which I do not mean that brand of foolishness proffered by Senator Kennedy and the editors of the *New York Times.* It is not equality and irresponsibility that Aron cherishes, but liberty and civility. While most French intellectuals were reading Marx, he wisely kept company with his

"master and friend," Alexis de Tocqueville. As a result, his books are landmarks in the moral history of our time. In *The Opium of the Intellectuals* he turned Marx's clever taunt ("religion is the opiate of the people") against the Marxists; in *History and the Dialectic of Violence* he subjected Sartre's Marxist magnum opus to a searching critique; in *Marxism and the Existentialists* he engaged Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in reasoned argument, to their considerable disadvantage.

For years Aron fought a lonely battle; but in the early 1970's, the tide began to turn. The work of Solzhenitsyn, Sakharov and Roy Medvedev, together with the testimony of Russian émigré dissidents so stunned the French left that a number of young men who had participated in the May Days of 1968 metamorphosed into "new philosophers," turning their polemical skills against Marxism and all its works. Although these firebrands—notably André Glucksmann and Bernard-Henri Levy—have attracted a great deal of attention in the United States, the Aronian liberals who have gathered around the journals *Contrepoint* and *Commentaire* are less well known. This is a pity because these men are patiently laying the foundation for a return to liberal values. In the words of *Commentaire's* motto: "There is no happiness without liberty, nor liberty without fortitude."

Alain Besançon is among the younger members of the *Contrepoint-Commentaire* circle. Director of the École des Hautes Études in Paris, he is a distinguished student of Russian history with a serious interest in psychoanalysis. Unlike many French historians, he is not attracted to the *Annales* school of social and economic history. Rather, he champions a philosophical history in the tradition of Thucydides and Polybius. Among French historians, he admires Guizot, Tocqueville and Lavisse; his mentors in Russian history include Leroy-Beaulieu, University of California Professor Martin Malia and Boris Souvarine. The latter, author of an early (1935) and critical biography of Stalin, has only recently been vindicated by the researches of Solzhenitsyn, Medvedev, Robert Conquest and others and enjoys, at last, the respect he has long deserved.

In this thoughtful volume, Besançon set out to answer a question of political as

Professor Congdon is a fellow at The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

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well as historical importance: To what extent is Soviet history and policy determined by Marxist-Leninist ideology? According to most anti-Soviet Russians, the ideology—imported from the West—created in Russia a monstrous dictatorship that represents a fundamental break with the country's past. Some Western historians, including the Polish-born Richard Pipes, take a different view; adapting Tocqueville's famous argument concerning historical continuity during the French Revolution, they insist that the Soviet Union is better understood as a *Russian* than as a communist state. On such a reading, Lenin and Stalin were not the heirs of Marx and Engels, but of Byzantine Emperors and Mongol Khans.

Besançon adopts something of a third view, although he is closer to Solzhenitsyn than he is to Pipes. Like the great Russian writer, he argues that the Soviet Union cannot properly be understood without constant reference to the ideology that legitimates it, and in the first chapter he makes his conception of "ideology" explicit. It is not, he insists, a religion, although it exhibits structural similarities to the ancient Christian heresy called gnosticism, a point that Eric Voegelin has also made. Nor is it a philosophy or a science, although it sets great store by the alleged certainty of its propositions. Instead, ideology is the corruption of both religion and science, a pseudoreality that is hermetically sealed and self-certifying. The partisans of this pseudoreality are quite literally possessed by it and will not rest until the competing reality of the nonideological world is completely destroyed.

Taken in this sense, Leninism is sui generis, the only ideology the world has yet known. To be sure, this parasite almost invaded France during the Reign of Terror and Germany during the romantic era, but it failed to do so because of the fabric and resolution of French and German "civil society." Civil society, according to Besançon, is constituted by those who, whatever their differences with their fellows, maintain a sense of community and common purpose; those who accept the world as it is and work to improve it by degree; those, finally, who reject any notion of a totally new reality. Civil society is, in sum, liberal society. In the West, this liberal society has steadily increased in size, influence and political competence, freeing itself gradually from the constraints once imposed on it

by the Absolute State. In Russia, on the other hand, ideology has destroyed civil/liberal society.

How did this occur? Despite what he wrote in a *Contrepoint* article ("Soviet Present and Russian Past," 1974) about the undeserved ill-repute of the Byzantines and the Mongols ("a brave people, a people of justice and honor"), Besançon cannot deny that Marxism in Russia assumed a very different form than it did in the West; between Jaurès or Kautsky and Lenin there is a great gulf. In an effort to explain this difference, he lays particular stress on the damaging effects of Russian anti-Westernism, which brings him a giant step closer to Professor Pipes. For Westernizers, from Chaadaev to Osip Mandelstam and Anna Akhmatova, Besançon displays considerable sympathy. Even radicals such as Herzen and Bielinski receive good marks because in the final analysis he judges them to be liberal reformers, a description perhaps better reserved for enlightened bureaucrats such as Nikolai Miliutin, a principal architect of the great reforms of the 1860's. On the other hand the Slavophiles, men like Kireevski and Khomyakov, are anathema because they idealized pre-Petrine—that is, pre-Western— Russia and disdained law "as the normal framework for freedom and the autonomy of the individual." In their hatred of liberalism and capitalism they prefigured Lenin and the Bolsheviks.

The spirit of ideology first manifested itself, then, in Slavophilism, but the Slavophiles were not the only members of that distinct social stratum called the intelligentsia. Like the civil society which after midcentury was occupying ever more territory once reserved for the state, this small but articulate group opposed the autocracy. Unlike the liberals, however, the leaders of the intelligentsia aimed at a total and immediate transformation, an apocalypse. Completely alienated from the world as it was, they lived in a self-contained ideological "reality." Of those discussed here, Besançon focuses on Nikolai Chernyshevski because of his importance to the crystallization of Leninism. In his didactic revolutionary novel *What Is To Be Done?,* Chernyshevski conjured up the prototypical revolutionary and "new man"—Rakhmetov. This fanatic does not simply believe in the ideology (a kind of moral perfectionism masquerading as science); in a very real sense, he *is* the ideology. Divorced from it he has no being. Never doubting his vocation, he tells all who will listen how the world must become what he is.

It was, of course, against Chernyshevski and his admirers and imitators that Dostoyevski wrote his great novels, including *The Possessed.* And yet, according to Besançon, the Russian genius stood too close to the Slavophiles, echoing the apocalypticism and hatred of the liberal West—a charge he has also leveled against Solzhenitsyn. There is an element of truth in this, but it does seem that Professor Besançon himself exhibits a certain cultural myopia. However great his longing for Christian brotherhood, Dostoyevski loved this world at least as

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much as did his liberal critics. The cause of Ivan Karamazov's damnation, after all, is that he, like the revolutionaries, hated this imperfect world and those who inhabit it.

In any event, Besançon proceeds to argue that the intelligentsia needed a political party to elevate it to power. The turning point came in 1898 with the organization of the Russian Social Democratic Party, soon to be split into Bolshevik (majority) and Menshevik (minority) factions. Besançon lavishes a good bit of praise on the "father of Russian Marxism"—Georgi Plekhanov—and the Mensheviks who remained faithful to his moderate, essentially Western strategy. Willing to wait for the "bourgeois democratic" revolution, the moderate Social Democrats, we are assured, would have been co-opted by a maturing Russian liberalism that "had at its disposal a political reservoir which enabled it to create, between 1900 and 1905, a true party [the Cadets, or Constitutional Democrats] in the Western sense of the term." To support this claim he instances the able Social Democratic theorist Petr Struve, who "declared himself to be much more interested in liberty than in socialism. . . ." Professor Besançon is so optimistic about the possibilities for moderation that he believes fate to have been "on the side of the liberal (or social-democrat liberal) parties which represented civil society."

Concerning Struve, Professor Besançon is quite right and, certainly, one cannot say with any assurance what turns history might have taken had there not been a World War. But it is well to remember that men such as Struve and Cadet leader Paul Miliukov were uncommon in Russia and had no following among the peasant masses. Moreover, even Professor Besançon concedes that in Russia, the civil society had always been crushed beneath a despotic state. Thus, while a liberal evolution along Western lines cannot be ruled out, it can scarcely be presupposed.

Whatever its prospects, however, there is no question that liberalism was dealt a staggering blow by Lenin's increasing influence. Like Rakhmetov, this resolute man had so completely absorbed (Marxist) ideology (as it was catechized by Engels) that he no longer possessed an independent self. Given an opportunity by the Great War, he seized power in 1917 from the decent but inept and unpopular Kerenski government; then, seeing that utopia could not be created at a stroke, he settled for an "ideological reconstitution of reality." Henceforth, he would allow no empirical evidence to controvert the claim that the Bolshevik government was building socialism. In this way he transformed the ideology from a doctrine to be believed into the sign and emblem of power. The point, then, is not whether or not the Soviet people or the Soviet leaders believe the *doctrine;* both the rulers and the ruled recognize the *power* that the ideology possesses to compel formal assent to the super or the surreality. For that reason it is crucial to the regime's long-term survival. As Aron observed recently, "once ideology and the sanctioning of the super-reality is eliminated . . . all that is left is a bizarre, irrational, expensive industrial structure (which has nothing to do with building socialism)." *(In Defense of Decadent Europe,* p. 39)

Following Solzhenitsyn and Aron, Professor Besançon has skillfully demonstrated the pivotal importance of ideology in the history of the Soviet Union. He has not, however, dispelled the suspicion that Russia was uniquely vulnerable to the ideological bacillus. Nor has he made a very convincing case with respect to liberalism's future during the last years of Tsarist rule. Nevertheless, this book deserves a wide audience because of its author's insights and his commitment to those liberal traditions that have thus far prevented the United States and Western Europe from becoming ideology's captives. □

Terminally Naive

Helen Garner: *Monkey Grip;* Seaview Books; New York.

Joyce Carol Oates: *Angel of Light;* E.P. Dutton; New York.

Helen Weinzweig: *Basic Black with Pearls;* William Morrow & Co.; New York.

by Robert C. Steensma

Early in her story, the feminist newspaperwoman of Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* admits: "Terminal naivety was my disease." Oddly enough, it is also the ailment that afflicts the major characters in Joyce Carol Oates's *Angel of Light* and Helen Weinzweig's *Basic Black with Pearls*—that is, a hopelessly and disastrously simplistic view of themselves, their world and their experiences. Obsessed with sex, violence and alienation, these people are almost continuously picking lint from their psychological navels while complaining about the bad deal they've gotten from life. Consequently, all three books have been greeted with the customary banalities from reviewers in the popular press. The incessant repetition of phrases such as "brilliant performance," "compellingly readable," "shatteringly beautiful," "deliberately laconic," "utterly honest" indicates that some reviewers are more adept at thumbing a thesaurus than at reading a book.

Of the three writers, Joyce Carol Oates is by far the best known. *Angel of Light* is her thirteenth novel, and she has also published eleven volumes of short stories —all since 1964, when her first novel, *With Shuddering Fall,* appeared. Having won the National Book Award in 1969 for *them,* she continues to produce,

Dr. Steensma is professor of English at the University of Utah.

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on the average, a book a year, and the "Oates fiction factory" (as one critic has called her talent) is one industry seemingly unaffected by recession or supply-side economics. By contrast, Polish-Canadian Helen Weinzweig, now nearing seventy, published her only other novel about ten years ago, while Australian Helen Garner, about forty, is publishing her first. Although the three women vary in age, nationality and productivity, together they lend support to the thesis that literary tackiness is limited by neither time nor place.

These three books reflect the moral and aesthetic atrophy that characterizes a certain segment of modern fiction. Not only are they concerned with the threadbare theme of modern alienation, but they also use rather stale plots. Garner and Weinzweig write about pathetic and mindless women tied to faithless and flawed lovers, while Oates wastes her alleged talent and time on two young people whose fantasies of familial and social betrayal lead them to murder and terrorism. Like too many contemporary writers, they have sold out to the media and to academic reviewers who hype their books and give them a nice income on the college reading circuit.

Garner's book is set in the mid-1970's in Melbourne, Australia, and presents an unmarried narrator of thirty-three, who is involved in a seedy love affair with a drug-sodden actor ten years her junior. Although she recognizes him as a moral and physical derelict, she is as dependent upon him as he is on dope. Unable to escape either him or the grubby commune in which she lives, she finally resigns herself to a miserable lifetime of waiting for her lover: "Well . . . so be it. Let it be what it is," is the profound wisdom upon which she spiritually subsists. She recognizes that in "the heart very little happened," that she and her friends in the commune have simply "thrashed about swapping and changing partners." As a feminist she senses that there must be something worthwhile in life, perhaps even her precocious daughter, but she can't find it; indeed, she doesn't even try. Love and drugs are simply momentary sensations that light her way to a dusty death: "Smack habit, love habit—what's the difference? They can both kill you."

Weinzweig's story is narrated by an older woman whose life is frittered away in dull reunions with her shadowy lover, who schedules their brief trysts through an elaborate code derived from copies of *National Geographic*. She spends most of her time waiting in hotel rooms around the world, thumbing through her collection of post cards from cities where she has slept with him and thinking about her drab existence. In the meantime she stays married to her faithless husband until she reluctantly shares a bed with him and his mistress while they make love and she fantasizes sexually about a new acquaintance, a Mennonite ecologist, for whom she soon deserts both lover and husband as the book grinds to an end.

Joyce Carol Oates's novel is the only one of the three to transcend the level of the drugstore pulp, but it too is badly flawed, in this case by her reliance upon what one critic has called her "unpruned garden of high gothic romance." A brother and sister—ages 21 and 17 respectively—set out to avenge the disgrace and mysterious death of their father, a federal official accused of wrongdoing who was killed in a mysterious auto accident. Both these self-righteous young people see themselves as reincarnations of their famous ancestor, abolitionist John Brown, Thoreau's "Angel of Light." In pursuing their revenge, they become the intellectual slaves of a terrorist organization and soon begin mouthing the old Marxist clichés about fascism, imperialism and America. The major problem with the book is that it has no focus, no sense of purpose. Since Oates seems to be unable to make up her mind, the result is an incoherent politico-sexual soap opera. Much better ought to be expected from a writer considered by some to be among the major feminine writing talents of her generation.

There are, however, occasional glimpses of her potential—for example, a passing description of a very recent president: "a fool who also happens to be a failure." And a delicious parody of Marxist political inanity:

> *Might as well bring it all down* —America. The world. The city. The neighborhood. Flames to the sky, a funeral pyre. . . . The error of liberal thinking. Counterproductive. Retarding the revolution. . . . We of the American Silver Doves Revolutionary Army do hereby declare NEVER to submit to the murder, exploitation, and oppression of the world's population in the name of American Fascistic Capitalist Imperialism.

Angel of Light demonstrates the chronic weaknesses of Oates's work (and that of many of her contemporaries as well). She seems to be able to write only about compulsives who spout fashionable social and political clichés and expend their lives in brutal and self-destructive ways. Her themes are too often those of the TV melodrama—murder, psychological violence, sexual adventurism, paranoia—while her attempts to treat more serious matters are usually simplistic and trivial. While these themes may result in luscious sales in the suburbs, they do little to create fiction which speaks to the human dilemma and the problems that pull and tear at the spirit.

"I'm impressed too by how clearly [Oates] remembers that her first duty is not to judge but to understand. . . . a strong and fascinating novel on its own terms."
—*New York Times Book Review*

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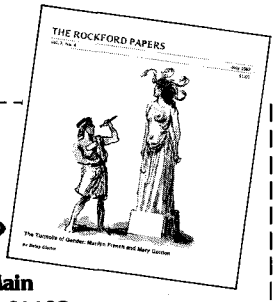

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ian jungle in which human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Society is corrupt; government is fascist; God is dead or dying—all the sleazy wisdom of the 60's and 70's is replayed. The major characters in the three novels are alike in that they want to live "in the moment," and thus all they find is a "half-life of waiting." Whimpering about their problems, they remain morally and intellectually impotent to change their situations. They are naturalistically drawn, but, unlike their forerunners in Norris, Crane, London and Dreiser, they make no effort to escape. Their moral senses are crippled, their views of the world and themselves diseased.

It is not necessarily the subjects of these books that make them so irritating. After all, great writers from the Greek tragedians to Graham Greene to Saul Bellow have effectively used revenge, murder, violence, alienation and sex in their work. But they have done so with the assumption that somewhere beyond the immediate horror is a context of values which gives significance to the trauma. Literary sex and violence outside such a moral context produce nothing more than an ephemeral tickling of the senses.

There are those who suggest that the novel as a literary genre may be dying. The obituary may be premature, but the cheap naiveté of writers like Garner, Oates and Weinzweig may well prove terminal. □

Myths, Martyrs and the Media

Edwin R. Bayley: *Joe McCarthy and the Press;* University of Wisconsin Press; Madison, Wisconsin.

Brian Jackson; *The Black Flag: A Look Back at the Strange Case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti;* Routledge & Kegan Paul of America; Boston.

by Charles A. Moser

Any society nurtures myths, and the Sacco-Vanzetti and Joe McCarthy myths are among the most potent ones embedded in the 20th-century political and intellectual culture of the United States.

Each of the books above undertakes an historical analysis of one of these myths. Jackson asks again whether the two Italian anarchists executed in 1927 for the murders of two men at South Braintree, Massachusetts in April 1920 were indeed guilty of that crime. Bayley concentrates on the role of the news media in creating the political phenomenon known as McCarthyism. Bayley, a journalist who covered McCarthy for the *Milwaukee Journal* during the Senator's heyday, does not conceal his hostility toward that emblematic figure of the early 1950's, but he has done a remarkably painstaking job of reviewing the press coverage on McCarthy, of talking with journalists active at the time, and of presenting divergent views on McCarthy's historical significance. Jackson's study is rather more impressionistic than Bayley's, more subjective, though it, too, is rooted in fact. An Englishman, Jackson commenced his investigation convinced of his subjects' innocence; after a careful review of the evidence brought out at the trial, he visited Massachusetts to investigate still other material and concluded, a little unexpectedly, that *"both* the case for innocence *and* the case for guilt seemed strengthened" in his eyes. In the end Jackson cannot overcome the power of the myth. He still believes Sacco and Vanzetti to have been innocent, but now there is an element of doubt in his mind. He is certain that the two men died as secular martyrs for the cause of social justice, and it was precisely his interest in martyrs—those who by their deaths "pulled the future towards them," as he says—which first led him to study the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

Both Sacco and Vanzetti were quite conscious of the importance of their martyrdom as an undergirding for the political myth they hoped to create. Though each had a poor command of English, there is a compelling rhetorical quality to the statements in which they defined that myth. Sacco—less the poet but more the political myth-maker than his comrade—maintained from the start that he would be executed for political reasons, for he believed that the courts of Massachusetts could not possibly acquit him. He was much less interested than Vanzetti in pursuing legal appeals which might reverse his conviction, and just before his execution he wrote his son Dante a long letter containing passages which defined the meaning of his death as he wished others to understand it:

> . . . help the weak ones that cry for help, help the persecuted, and the victim, because that are your better friends; they are the comrades that fight and fall as your father and Bartolo fought and fell yesterday for the conquest of the joy of freedom for all and the poor workers.

Because he belonged to the oppressed class which was necessarily victimized, Sacco held, the social reality of the moment could tolerate no other outcome than his death.

With the groundswell of support from well-meaning citizens focused by such organizations as the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee, Sacco and Vanzetti had good reason to believe their view of the trial would prevail over that of, say, the simple jurors who condemned them on factual grounds, and who saw it as nothing more than a criminal trial. And they were correct. By the time Jackson began his research, of the vast quantity of literature to have appeared on the subject only four items—including but two of much substance—maintained that Sacco and Vanzetti (or at least Sacco) were actually guilty of the murders.

Professor Moser teaches at George Washington University.

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Their myth grew to such dimensions that, on the fiftieth anniversary of their execution, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts issued a lengthy proclamation decreeing, among other things, that "any stigma and disgrace should be forever removed from the names of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti." In the end Sacco and Vanzetti were vindicated by the myth they had helped to create.

Although the myth of Senator Joseph McCarthy is of more recent vintage and quite different from that of Sacco and Vanzetti, it is probably even more powerful in our day. It may be summarized succinctly in the words of Murray Marder of the *Washington Post,* a man who reported on McCarthy in the 1950's:

> Careers and families were destroyed, people committed suicide. Fear was in the atmosphere; you always had to know who you were talking to. . . . Anybody who had been in public life was vulnerable, and you had to think back through all your associations. It was the closest we ever came to a real totalitarian atmosphere.

As for the reality, we might recall the anti-McCarthy film, *Point of Order,* which makes it clear that McCarthy's colleagues in the Senate were not at all terrified of him—quite the opposite. McCarthy could not have done what he did alone: he simply voiced a genuine concern among the citizenry over the possibility of treason in high places. There was reason to wonder about this, what with the loss of mainland China to the communists, the revelations of the Alger Hiss trial and, later, the outbreak of the Korean War.

The McCarthy myth, unlike that of Sacco and Vanzetti, depended heavily upon the media for its propagation, if only because the mass media, including television, had become such a force in American life by the 1950's. McCarthy's "power" depended upon the media too: Bayley reports that when McCarthy died in 1957 the *New York Times* asked its reporter "who would inherit McCarthy's organization," only to be told there was no organization: the Senator had exercised his power almost entirely through the media, and now that he was gone nothing would remain of it.

McCarthy was aware of his dependence on the media. Bayley remarks that "he had the instinct, if not the discipline, of a newspaper reporter"; he knew how to give reporters good copy at the right times (indeed, if we are to believe Bayley, he sometimes even offered to say whatever the reporter interviewing him wanted him to say). He generally liked reporters and sometimes failed to understand why they took his attacks upon them seriously. "The essence of his style," Bayley comments, was "repetition, not originality"; here again McCarthy showed a grasp of the essence of mass journalism. There was much of the showman in McCarthy: he craved public attention and was too often flashily irresponsible in his accusations. But the fact that he dealt with a serious issue of public policy—if not always for serious reasons—helps account for the virulence of the opposition he aroused at the time and the negative power of the McCarthy myth since then.

Using Senator McCarthy as a case study, Bayley considers the question of how the news media should treat political phenomena which, by and large, they consider harmful. Conservative journalist Willard Edwards, Bayley says, believes that McCarthyism "killed anti-communism for years"—although it also stunted the communist movement—and that the anti-McCarthy press would have been best advised to ignore his charges and activities. But nearly the entire press rejected that approach, so the problem became *how* to cover him. Some newspapers—for example the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Washington Post*—gave him extensive coverage, perhaps in the hope that he would discredit himself in the public mind. The prestige press of the East Coast tended to be against McCarthy, but many other papers—and also the wire services, which had to satisfy clients of quite varied views—initially reported on McCarthy as straight news, adhering to what one journalist has described disgustedly as "phony objectivity," that is, reporting McCarthy's accusations as though they were true, without any rebuttal or interpretation. The tactic of generous exposure did not work well, however, because McCarthy was raising a genuine issue.

The press then resorted, Bayley thinks, to what we know now as "advocacy journalism," or, as Bayley phrases it approvingly, "McCarthyism gave us Mary McGrory." (McGrory covered McCarthy at the time for the *Washington*

In the Mail

Hermes: Literature, Philosophy, Science **by Michel Serres, edited by Josué V. Harari and David F. Bell; The Johns Hopkins University Press; Baltimore, Maryland.** A collection of essays on literature, philosophy and epistemology by an important contemporary French thinker.

Superstock **by Stuart M. Speiser; Everest House Publishers; New York.** A novel of intrigue about saving American capitalism, making it compatible with Marxism and avoiding nuclear confrontation with the U.S.S.R.

The First Year: A Mandate for Leadership Report **edited by Richard N. Holwill; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C.** An assessment of the first year of the Reagan Administration which is being used by Reagan managers to improve their performance.

"NATO and Neutralism" The Heritage Lectures No. 8 by Stephen Haseler and Werner Kaltefleiter; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. An analysis of the difficulties of NATO by two leading European political analysts and their suggestions for means by which the damage NATO has sustained in recent years might be repaired.

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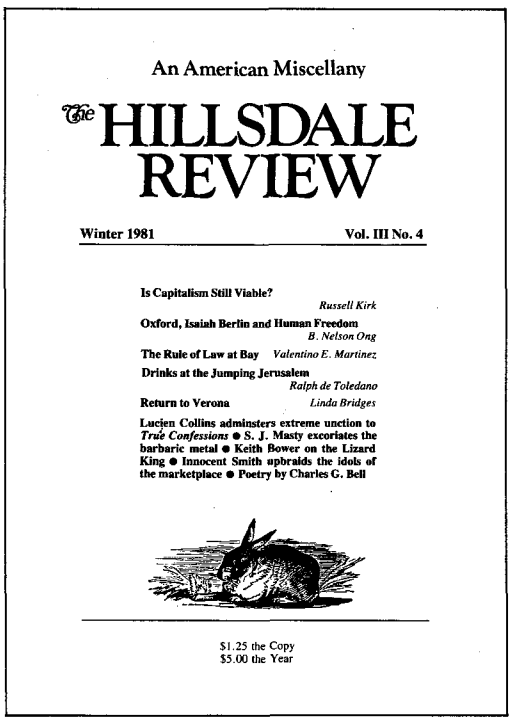
Star, and her name is today a byword among Washington conservatives as a symbol of a slanted political reporter.) The *Milwaukee Journal* pioneered this sort of reporting by inserting into its McCarthy stories bracketed material which disputed or refuted his charges. If "objective" reporting assumed that the charges made by a United States Senator were probably correct, advocacy journalism in its early stages implicitly or explicitly assumed that McCarthy was a liar.

In the traditional Catholic Church, believers were not encouraged to read the Bible without the benefit of priestly interpretation. In our secular world the liberal journalistic fraternity regards itself as a priesthood which must interpose itself between the citizen and reality: journalists not only report the news, but they must invest it with the correct meaning as well. And so the television networks provide instant interpretations of addresses by Presidents and other public figures, and journalists seem to spend more time speculating about the future than they do in discovering what has actually happened. Speculation about the future is usually grounded in major assumptions about reality in which myth plays a large role. Myth has an aesthetic and intellectual coherence which journalists admire; the more formal education they acquire, the less they care for the messiness of historical fact and the inconsistencies of actuality.

Bayley and Jackson have at least sought to unearth the historical facts at the base of the myths with which they deal. But Bayley cannot bring himself to consider the possibility that McCarthy might have been essentially correct in his charges—that is entirely too risky—and so his conclusions are more congruent with the myth than with the material he presents in his book:

> Its [the press's] duty is to furnish the information. In the case of McCarthy, the press did not properly fulfill this function. Nor does the press deserve credit for its final wolf-pack descent on McCarthy when it became apparent that he intended to go right on attacking the Republican Eisenhower administration with the same vigor and venom he had expended on Truman's Democrats.
>
> But for those journalists who recognized the threat to American principles posed by McCarthyism . . . it was a glorious time. History has given them too little credit.

Jackson also deals with the hard facts of history and finds the evidence difficult to assess. For that intellectual honesty he is to be commended. But ultimately he is most interested in the anarchist political tradition from which Sacco and Vanzetti came, and in the political significance of their conviction and execution. As a result, his conclusions remain generally within the parameters of the myth. If tomorrow we should discover conclusive evidence that Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty as charged, it would make little difference to the myth, for the link between myth and historical fact is wondrously subtle. □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Sleazy Treatments of Complex Matters

Anthony Cave Brown and Charles B. MacDonald: *On a Field of Red;* G.P. Putnam's Sons; New York.

Donald Neff: *Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East;* Linden Press/Simon & Schuster; New York.

by Alan J. Levine

On a Field of Red is purportedly a major work on Soviet and communist intrigues from 1919 to 1943; unfortunately it proves to be a major disappointment. This is particularly saddening since the co-author, Charles B. MacDonald, is one of America's finest military historians. The book is marred by carelessness, inaccuracy and poor judgment, which are quite uncharacteristic of MacDonald's—though not of Anthony Cave Brown's—earlier works. The book neither supplies an accurate account of Soviet-directed intrigues nor fulfills its declared aim of tying the Comintern's moves to World War II—something which certainly could have been done. Not only have they said nothing new, but also much of what they claim is new is not true.

The authors disclaim any attempt at a "formal history" of the Comintern; they are concerned only with its "intrigues and subversive operations" in America, Britain and Germany and with how "Comintern policy, in concert with Soviet revolutionary diplomacy, contributed to the coming of World War II." They argue that the Cold War began with the October Revolution and Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War, not after World War II. There is certainly a case to be made for this contention—but they do not make it. They claim to be using recently declassified U.S. military-intelligence files, but their book actually concentrates on mostly well-known Soviet intelligence operations. One of their prime "new" sources, the Weinkoop manuscript, is probably not authentic. The authors do raise some interesting points—for example, the suggestion that the most effective Soviet atomic spy, Klaus Fuchs, was actually a double agent for the British from 1945-1950—and their book does provoke thought. In reading their accounts of British and American traitors, it is striking how peculiarly slimy and depraved the former seem. Next to Burgess, Maclean and Philby, Hiss, Gold and the Rosenbergs seem almost normal and likeable. It would be interesting to discover the explanation for their radically differing views and characterizations of the traitors of the two English-speaking peoples. Unfortunately such matters are buried in a poorly balanced work. It is rare to encounter a book with such a lack of proportion; far more space is devoted to the dismal tale of King Edward VIII than to any of the Comintern congresses which laid down the general tactics of the world communist movement. The book is littered with mistakes, confusion and unsubstantiated assertions—though some of the latter could have been supported had the authors done their homework. The White Russian leader, General Denikin, is described as a "lean, hard-riding aristocrat." Actually Denikin was a rather roly-poly infantry officer and the son of a serf; the authors apparently confused him with General Wrangel. The nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg is described as German foreign minister; he never occupied that post. The authors waste much space trying to extract nuggets of truth from the fake or largely fake Sisson documents of 1918, which purportedly showed that intimate relations existed between Imperial Germany and the Bolsheviks. They are apparently unaware that *genuine* German Foreign Office documents uncovered in the 1950's amply showed the truth of such charges.

Many of their ideas about World War I-era Europe are distorted or bizarre. Is it true, for example, that Europe of 1903, *including England,* "was ruled by monarchs and princes"? There is an odd tendency to see Europe as a whole, and Britain in particular, as far more backward and "reactionary" than it really was. An era when people and their rights were far safer and more secure than they are today is portrayed as an age of antediluvian absolutism. Churchill is treated as a "tory" or "reactionary" when he was actually a maverick liberal. Much ink is spilled smearing Britain's and Churchill's motives in opposing Soviet communism (which is particularly strange since the authors are obviously anti-Soviet). Some of the selective quotes of Churchill's more purple rhetoric tend to disguise, perhaps unintentionally, the fact that his anti-Soviet stance was based on his understanding of what was later called totalitarianism. It is absurd to suggest, in light of recent well-documented studies, that British aims in North Russia were "imperialistic."

Such thinking culminates in a misunderstanding of both communism and the milieu in which the Comintern and the Soviet Union operated. The authors insist that the disturbances in post-World War I Europe, including Britain, were "revolutionary." They repeatedly claim that "preconditions for a successful world revolution of the proletariat existed": "Lenin had ample reason to believe that a world revolution of the proletariat was imminent." This is a vast exaggeration of the influence of communism at that time and of the importance of disturbances that were usually quite minor.

If such revolutionary potential actually existed in the Western world, it is hard to understand why the communists had to engage in the elaborate spy operations on which the authors focus. The truth of the matter is that world revolution, *in the*

Dr. Levine is a frequent contributor to the Chronicles.

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original Leninist sense, i.e. that the Russian revolution would spark similar revolutions elsewhere, was always a mirage. Perhaps if they had been better led, communists might have succeeded in seizing power in Berlin and Vienna in 1919, but they could not have retained it. Even such a temporary victory was possible only in countries that had suffered defeat: there was no possibility of a successful communist takeover in advanced countries in 1919. The Russian, Leninist, type of revolution could not be repeated in the West because of the structure of modern societies. (In fact, it could not be repeated elsewhere, either—communist revolutions in underdeveloped countries have all been quite different from the original Bolshevik takeover.) Only in a few countries have a majority of industrial workers been converted to the support of the Communist Party—and even this is no real indication of a revolutionary mood or true willingness to fight. In the rare cases where a revolutionary mood has actually existed, it has been shown that communist-led workers cannot take over a modern society; the government and the other classes of society are simply too strong. The idea of a "world revolution" in the sense of a total communist victory by other methods, however, is not impossible at all. Such revolution by way of Soviet military conquest, political manipulation and communist takeovers in backward countries is not in any sense a mirage.

By exaggerating the influence of the Comintern and the strength of Communist Parties, the authors distort the history of communism. It is not true, for example, that Comintern directed the 1919 uprisings, and most European Communist Parties were not originally Soviet puppets. It was several years before European communism came under Soviet control through the Comintern. The authors seem unaware of this long and difficult process. Indeed, they seem barely aware of—or are uninterested in—the real inner history of the Comintern, its policies and the terrible things it did do.

The real influence exerted by the Comintern in the era between the wars was not through the intrigues that Brown and MacDonald discuss, but in its "missionary efforts" and its manipulation of Communist Parties abroad. While the Comintern did not succeed in actually making a revolution anywhere, it created the communist movement in Asia. In Europe, the Comintern's actions did contribute to events which precipitated World War II, although it is one aspect of the nazi era that is usually downplayed by fashionable historians. The policies dictated by the Sixth Comintern Congress—and supported by Stalin—made the Weimar Republic and its supporters, rather than the nazis, the main enemy for the German Communist Party. It is unlikely that the nazis would have been able to take power in Germany had the Reds followed a different course. (Whether a nazi victory was Stalin's real aim is still an open question.) The tremendous role of the communists in the German catastrophe is virtually ignored by Brown and MacDonald; they mention it only in the context of discussing a rather unlikely claim that Stalin once subsidized the nazi party.

In October 1956 Britain and France, enraged by Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal and Nasser's hostility, combined with Israel to attack Egypt. With an easy victory almost complete, they were forced to back down by a weird alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower's belief in the rule of international law, and some specific doubts about the wisdom of our allies' policies, forced him into that distasteful action. He could hardly have foreseen that some would perversely hail it as his finest hour.

Donald Neff's repellent, sleazy, misleading account of the Suez-Sinai War marks a new step in fashionable thinking about the Middle East. A new step, but not a new trend, for Neff merely continues the well-established tradition of leaving behind reality and truth when dealing with the Middle East. He portrays the Anglo-French-Israeli war against Egypt as a brutal act of aggression, a "last effort to pound Egypt and the Middle East back into subservience to colonialism." In addition to elaborating on an old myth, Neff tries to concoct a new one—namely that President Eisenhower "took America into the Middle East." Before Suez, Neff says, "America's involvement in the region was minimal." This claim is absurd; the Middle East was one of the major theaters of the Cold War from the moment that struggle started.

Neff's treatment of Israel and its role in 1956 verges on the bizarre; in essence, it is an attempt to publicize the Arab propaganda version of events and an effort to link Israel to the bugaboo of "colonialism." According to Neff, the "real problem" in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict; if only that problem could be solved to the satisfaction of "the Arabs" (which Arabs?) all would be well —there would be peace in the Middle East. In light of the Iran-Iraq war and the numerous conflicts between the Arab states, the absurdity of his claim is manifest. Unfortunately it appeals to the wishful thinking of many.

In the Mail

Constraining Inflationary Government **by Antonio Martino; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C.** An analysis of the nature of inflation and government growth, with particular reference to the Italian fiscal constitution.

Christianity and Politics: Catholic and Protestant Perspectives **edited by Carol Friedley Griffith; Ethics and Public Policy Center; Washington, D.C.** A collection of essays dealing with the relationship of the Christian ethic to a broad political and social order and the application of the Christian ethic to particular areas of public policy.

Catching Fire **by Kay Nolte Smith; Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; New York.** A conservative thriller about unionism as a villain, which hardly makes it a mystery.

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Few people of this school, however, have given freer rein to their fantasies. In order to portray Israel as the aggressor, Neff resorts to the tedious method of emphasizing any violent or hostile Israeli actions while ignoring or minimizing the events that triggered them. Israel's reprisal raids for border incidents or Palestinian raids are much more heartily condemned than "fedayeen" activities in Israel. Neff barely mentions Egypt's closure of the Suez Canal and the Strait of Tiran to Israeli ships; he intones solemnly that Egypt's justification for this —that the two countries were at war— was just a "fiction." Even an observer not especially favorable to Israel, Colonel T.N. Dupuy, has commented that this paradoxical statement "places them in the position of basing their case upon two inconsistent arguments. Either they were not at war with Israel—in which case their blockade of the Suez Canal, and even more of the Strait of Tiran, was an illegal violation of international law, and a clear casus belli—or they were at war with Israel (thus justifying their position on the closure of the waterways) in which case the Israeli attack was merely a normal incident in such hostilities. Whatever one may think of the collusion between Israel, Britain and France, there is no justification for accusing Israel of aggression. Egypt wanted the rights of belligerency without the consequences."

A high point in Neff's hocus-pocus is his attempt to blend Israel with the specter of "colonialism," which he refuses to define, but paints in the darkest colors. He maintains that Egyptian military leaders' "resistance" to Israel was "based more on their suspicion of Western intentions than anti-Semitism, which was rare in Egypt," and that Israel was thought to be a "beachhead" for renewed imperialism. This is nonsense, as Nasser knew very well: Britain, the leading "imperialist" power in the Middle East, *opposed* the creation of Israel and openly backed the Arabs in 1948. *Britain, in fact, was the leading patron of nationalism in the Arab world until the 1950's,* although this may seem unbelievable, thanks to the smoke screen about "colonialism" created by Neff and people like him.

In his treatment of the British and French role in the Suez crisis, Neff is close to the prevailing orthodoxy. It has been fashionable to extenuate Israel's actions but condemn the Anglo-French response to Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal. Neff's obsession with "colonialism" is extreme, but not unique, merely a variation of accepted leftist notions about foreign policy:

1. "Colonialism" was not just unfortunate or outdated, but something horribly wicked for which the West must perpetually atone.

2. "Colonialism" includes not only actual rule over a foreign people, but anything that might be construed as an "intrusion," including military bases and investments.

3. Any attempt by ex-imperial powers to influence the ex-colonial world is a revival of "colonialism." Any use of force against an ex-colony, no matter what the provocation, is another manifestation of "nineteenth-century gunboat diplomacy."

4. National independence is "freedom," as exemplified by conditions in Indochina.

5. All anticolonial leaders and movements are good (and equal); Nasser, Sukarno, Nkrumah and Ho Chi Minh are seen by Neff as wearing the same mantle as Nehru, Kotewala, Quezon and Sjahrir.

6. It is preferable for former colonists to be neutral rather than allied with the United States, or even the West. U.S. foreign policy should be aimed at humoring our enemies—if necessary, at the expense of our friends.

Warriors at Suez is little more than a distillation of these precepts. Neff slides easily over the history of the last two decades, devoting a mere five pages to the aftermath of the war. Israel is treated with the usual bias; her victory in the Sinai "encouraged later generations of Israelis to pursue Ben Gurion's hostility toward the Arabs and to repeat the conquest of land by war. The 1967 capture of the Sinai and the West Bank by Israel led directly to the 1973 war that shook to the roots Israeli self-confidence and brought upon the world oil shortages, economic misery, and an incalculable strengthening of the Arab oil states." It is a remarkable feat to describe the origins of the 1967 war without mentioning Nasser's expulsion of the U.S. police force, his mobilization in the Sinai and blockade of the Strait of Tiran. It is still more farfetched to blame Israel for the relentless greed of the oil states. Nasser's brutal, if ineffectual, expansionism is described in a one-sentence reference to the war in the Yemen. Nasser's hostility toward the United States is blamed on Eisenhower's "blind prejudice" against Nasser. Neff ignores the fact that President Kennedy's considerable efforts at a reconciliation with Nasser proved ineffectual.

While indulging in fashionable sneers against John Foster Dulles, Neff nonetheless approves President Eisenhower's devotion to the "rule of law"; "it was one of the high points of his Presidency." But Ike himself regarded the Suez crisis, and the fact that he felt compelled to oppose our friends, as a bitter moment. It can also be argued that it was a shameful moment, one of the few great mistakes of his Presidency. That "rule of law" ultimately led to war, terrorism and oppression in the Middle East, and to potential economic disaster for the world. One can share Neff's generally high opinion of the Eisenhower Administration. Fortunately there are better foundations for such praise than its conduct in the Suez crisis. □

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COMMENDABLES

What Happened, When & How

Kenneth Thompson: ***Cold War Theories, Volume I: World Polarization, 1943-1953;*** Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

by Clay Clemens

Popular wisdom has it that Ronald Reagan will turn the clock back to the time of the Cold War. Because he purportedly employs the rhetoric of "confrontation" and has initiated a "massive arms build-up," Reagan stands accused of permitting détente to die on the vine.

This notion that a U.S. President sets the thermostat of East-West relations by his words and deeds is testimony to the inanity of revisionist historians. Left-wing writers who explain past and present hostility between the superpowers as the product of "American imperialism" have successfully detached the Cold War from its historical moorings; they have transformed it from an era into an attitude which is based on insidious and arrogant American assumptions about how the world ought to be.

A whole genre of popular writing and academic texts spreads this hollow message. In the name of evenhandedness, such books offer "competing interpretations" of *why* the Cold War developed, but, in the name of concision, they omit objective and detailed accounts of *what* happened or *when* or *how*. Ill-equipped to choose among the various versions, students of younger generations are skeptical of the "orthodox" Cold War story of virtuous America vs. godless communism. Thus college seniors who can't quite place the Marshall Plan in time, for example, nonetheless are quite sure that it reflected a deliberate expansion of America's financial empire.

Mr. Thompson's chosen title might suggest merely one more contribution to this already-substantial body of ahistorical writing. It is pleasantly surprising that he instead refreshes our memory of the decade in question by presenting and synthesizing an impressive amount of evidence in little more than two hundred pages. And his even-handed approach is not at the expense of sound historical analysis or genuine thoughtful criticism of works already in print.

Thompson does not set out to validate a particular hypothesis by picking up useful evidence en route (the method of so many revisionists); his book does not twist history merely to fit fact and theory together. He instead sifts through the relevant evidence, analyzes each critical decision made by the West during the Cold War and points out that "nuance and human choice" explain more about those events than any underlying design of global hegemony. A true understanding of the Cold War requires "learning to live with ambiguities," an admonition too many historians are unwilling to accept.

In this manner, Thompson indicts orthodox as well as revisionist versions of the Cold War, both of which attribute the actions of most individuals involved to larger, almost irresistible, historical forces. Such theories tell us less about international politics during the 1940's than about the prevailing assumptions of the decade in which they were written. Traditional depictions of the U.S. struggling against an overwhelming communist tide were typical of the patriotic postwar American milieu, while revisionist accounts characterized the self-flagellation so common in America of the 1960's. The academy, most news media and the popular press still cling to assumptions of American venality; they provide a harmonious setting for revisionist renditions of the original Cold War. Thompson's work, then, is most telling in its challenge to revisionist dogma: he exposes its "historical" outlook as little more than gut-level political prejudice: he requires those who espouse the revisionist line to think before he permits them to choose. □

Mr. Clemens is a doctoral candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Computer Epic

Tracy Kidder: ***The Soul of a New Machine;*** Little, Brown & Co.; Boston.

by Philip Levy

From 1979 to 1981 Tracy Kidder walked freely in and out of a computer lab in the basement of the Data General headquarters in Westborough, Massachusetts. He documented the creation of a new computer by a group of thirty engineers and a secretary. The computer was faster and smarter than any other in the Data General line, and compatible with all. The same might be said of the people who built it.

Kidder wasn't posing as a janitor or a security guard. He came to the story as a journalist, with a perfect vacuum between his ears, but with complete access to the workers on the computer project and their workplace. As a result, this book emerges as "new journalism" in its most positive form; that is to say, it is a tale of productive people who don't object to being written about intimately. The new journalism at its best is also involved with new technologies, because that is where the pioneers of the day are gathered. Pioneers make good copy. Kidder quotes all the participants by name and at length, enabling the personalities of the builders–the "soul" of the title–to emerge as big as life. He notes in detail the unique environment, from the dancing square waves on the face of an oscilloscope to the shifting sands of corporate planning.

If *The Soul of a New Machine* is popular among people in the electronics industry, it is because of Kidder's respect for the men and women about whom he wrote, as well as his poignant view of their work. He learned enough about computers to write intelligently about them, and for that he deserves commendation. But his real story is about people. Indeed, in another time and place the story might have been written about the creation of cellophane or the Pontiac GTO, because creative people have one common trait: namely, they are miles ahead of everyone else. The most touch-

Mr. Levy is a technical writer in Salem, Massachusetts.

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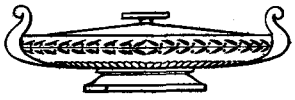
ing aspect of this book is the treatment of the computer engineers. These young dynamos are the intellectual iron of our day. They are the type of people for whom a 3-credit course was always one credit shy of any earthly value, the ones who realize that in a year or two they will be making as much as the professors at the University of Illinois, the University of Missouri, Northwestern and Georgia Tech (to mention a few from the book) who trained them so well. The engineers fresh from school are gorged with the fuel of knowledge and want only to find a place to burn it brightly. At Data General, in this particular group, they got the chance.

Kidder had before him not only two dozen young engineers oozing with peer pressure, but also a group of supervisors led by an exciting character, the project manager Tom West. In a sense, the bulk of the story is merely an illustration of West's personal power and endurance in the world of business. West created a dream team, and the team built a great computer. And yet the story does not have a happy ending. The prototype gets built, tested, retested and is given over to the manufacturing department. Then what? Then the romance is over, the battle is won and it's time to start updating the résumé. Within a year of the project's completion the entire supervisory staff (excluding West) had left Data General. Why? After such a thoroughgoing success, why would they pack up and go elsewhere?

At this point Kidder gets lost. First he offers an historical perspective on the problem of job satisfaction from none other than John Ruskin. Ruskin sheds some darkness on the subject by pointing to those ancient masters of microcode and hidden passageways, the stonemasons, who received sustenance not in coin but in the pure glory of building churches. Certainly a



computer engineer's reverence for the laws of physics is not to be doubted, and computer engineers love to see things being built. But why must this be bread enough? Furthermore, Kidder reports that some of the engineers complained that they hadn't received "the recognition or the loot they had earned." By using the word "loot" Kidder implies a certain childishness in their desire to be paid. That seems unfair.

It is possible for an engineer—in any field—to grind out sixteen or eighteen hours of daily enthusiasm for a project once or twice. But it is quite another task for an engineer to stretch the power of a computer to its maximum year after year, while the company payroll department is turning milliseconds into months as it attempts to get his promised stock options in the mail. Add to this the inevitability of disagreements with other engineers over credit for patents once a project is finished—who needs it? Who needs such aggravation when one's only incentive is the chance to be a part of a great team? Perhaps this is why the turnover among computer engineers closely resembles that among organic food store clerks. □

The Prophet of Taste

Arthur John: ***The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner's Monthly, and Century Magazine, 1870-1909;*** University of Illinois Press; Urbana, Illinois.

Richard Waston Gilder died in 1909, and the credo by which he had guided *Century Magazine* for nearly thirty years—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—hadn't long to live either. Gilder belonged to an era that believed that art should be a handmaiden to morality in the struggle to refine and elevate the baser side of human nature: good poems produce good people, and the moral poet writes edifying verse. By 1909 both Gilder and his credo had become anachronisms in a century that insisted—or so it seemed to Gilder—on spying truth amidst the sordid and ugly.

To the young rebels of the 1890's—the Cranes, Norrises and Dreisers—Gilder was the schoolmarmish arbiter of good taste who cast a baleful eye upon any manuscript that might besmirch the purity of a fourteen-year-old girl. To literary historians, Gilder embodies the tepid sentimentalism and pecksniffian obscurantism of the Genteel Tradition; as Larzer Ziff writes in *The American 1890's,* Gilder "most clearly epitomized the suppressing tone of the literary establishment."

Arthur John, by contrast, refuses the cheap satisfactions derived from smirking at Victorian moralizers. His Richard Watson Gilder emerges as a skillful editor with a sharp eye and high standards who pushed the *Century* to the heights of high-toned cultural journalism. One need not agree with Gilder's conflation of good art with exemplary morality to suggest that in our own age, when the rage to mock and destroy perverts the search for artistic truth into a phantasmagoric charade, we might learn something from Gilder's respect for good taste. Today's Let-It-All-Hang-Out school of fiction makes Richard Watson Gilder look more like a prophet than like the smug Victorian philistine of the literary historians' demonology. □

Heresy

John K. Rosemond: ***Parent Power!;*** East Woods Press; Charlotte, North Carolina.

This book is subtitled "A Common-sense Approach to Raising Children in the Eighties." It is a refreshing and much-needed change from the plethora of child-rearing guides which intimidate parents by making them believe that the so-called experts, furnished with all sorts of degrees in psychology, are the only ones who really know how to bring up children. Rosemond stresses discipline rather than permissiveness; following one's instincts rather than heeding current psychological jargon; books instead of television; imaginative play rather than countless toys; an occasional smack instead of perpetual reasoning, pleading and nagging. The parent is supposed to assume the role of benevolent dictator and to create an environment with limits and guidelines for children. He has the right to state firmly, "Because I say so," creating an autocratic hierarchy where father really does know best. The chapter subtitles are clues to the heretical nature, in a child-oriented society, of Rosemond's philosophy: "The Benevolent Dictatorship"; "Your Marriage Comes First"; "In Defense of Inconsistency"; "Painless Punishment"; "Spare the Rod but not the Rule."

Rosemond's book provides an antidote to the dissolution of authority and parental confusion—with its concomitant guilt for imaginary sins of omission or

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commission—that have been the salient features of child-rearing for decades. It stresses the fundamental wisdom of the adult rather than the child, with the former's privilege to put the marriage, rather than the child, first. Since the marriage is the core of the family, if the needs of the marriage are fulfilled, the children's needs will be realized. It has been a long time since this proposition has been asserted, and it goes a long way in assuaging the doubts of beleaguered parents. (MEF) □

Foul Play

Glenn N. Schram: ***Toward a Response to the American Crisis;*** University Press of America; Washington, D.C.

Don't expect Glenn Schram to win any awards from the American Political Science Association. Professor Schram simply has not played the game correctly; he has violated all the rules by which political scientists conduct themselves. For starters, *Toward a Response to the American Crisis* contains none of the opinion polls, statistical analyses or pseudoscientific jargon that make the tweed-clad hearts of academicians throb with joy. Worse, Professor Schram proceeds blandly along in his discussion of American society without the rapturous paeans to egalitarianism and utopian chimeras that one routinely finds in such books. Worst of all—and surely this excludes him from the company of respectable political scientists—Professor Schram blasphemes in the temple of secularity: such terms as "sin," "God" and "religious reawakening" dot his pages with alarming frequency. Professor Schram's problem lies in his inability to accept the well-known fact that man is the measure of all things and that if we pass enough laws and enlighten enough people we can find bliss and perfect justice in the here and now. His obstinate refusal to bow to the idols of contemporary ideology encourages one to think that political science may not be irreclaimably lost to those who use the discipline as an ax with which to hack their way through to utopia. □

In the Mail

"Education, Character, and American Schools" by Gerald Grant; Ethics and Public Policy Center; Washington, D.C. An examination of the myriad factors, from home life to dollars spent, which affect the quality of our children's education.

The Church, the State and Society in the Thought of John Paul II **by James V. Schall, S.J.; Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago.** An exploration of the Pope's thought in terms of philosophy and theology.

Tax Facts 3: The Canadian Consumer Tax Index and You **by Sally Pipes and Michael Walker with David Gill; The Fraser Institute; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.** An analysis of the hidden costs of the Canadian tax system.

Hoover Essays; **The Hoover Institution; Stanford, California.** A collection of essays by Hoover fellows, visiting scholars and authors covering a wide variety of subjects, both domestic and international in scope, by such scholars as Thomas Sowell, Edward Teller and others.

IN FOCUS

Romanticism of Survival

Rene Dubos: ***Celebrations of Life;*** McGraw-Hill Book Co.; New York.

by Jeff Wood

In his later years Mark Twain cynically referred to mankind as "That Damned Human Race." Beset by Darwin's theory of evolution and a world united only in its propensity toward war, he compared man, unfavorably, to brutes. In his last work, *The Mysterious Stranger,* Twain wrote that man differed from the animals in that he possessed a "Moral Sense," which only created greed, corruption, destruction and a Pandora's box full of evils. In short, the essential question that Twain faced, and that Rene Dubos faces in *Celebrations of Life,* concerns the nature of man. Man is a moral being, Twain thought, who is caught up in the eternal conflict between good and evil. Dubos disagrees, and he controverts Twain's legendary cynicism by ignoring this fundamental human struggle. His central thesis is that man is blessed with the freedom of social evolution, which creates tremendous potential for social growth. Dubos evokes an optimistic outlook for mankind, rejecting both modern-day Malthusian prophecies of doom and environmentalists' fears of world destruction.

This rambling, multidisciplinary work exhibits a heavy sociological focus. It chronicles the progress of, and theories generated by, sociology in this century and, as such, is worthwhile. It is mildly reminiscent of a college freshman's course in the subject: it presents a host of ideas about which one never really thought but which one always knew existed. The perceptive student realized that the best way to excel on the exam was to pitch back the professor's theories in ratification of their perfection and utility. In the process, students often neglected to question those theories. They made sense anyway—or did they? They were strings of ideas—based on the professor's collection of presumed truths—presented as fact. Such professors hoped to spend their entire lives supplementing their thesis until a complete picture came to view. The octogenarian Dubos exemplified this type of modern academician. His book portrays a lifetime of experiment, thought and intuition, an autobiographical paean to optimism and faith in the ability of social man to adapt to environment. Dubos centers his theory on an unshaken belief in man's freedom of choice. Beyond this, he believes that 20th-century society in particular is dominated by constant and pervasive change: "Wherever human beings are involved, trend is never destiny because life starts anew, for them, with each sunrise."

Dubos is somewhat of a romantic. He likes to speak of the "richness of the human encounter." He clings to dogged belief in human survival. *Celebrations of Life* is full of ideas without logic, facts without foundation, syllogisms without cohesion. It holds no central

Mr. Wood is a law student at Northwestern University.

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fabric except a trust in man's future. *How* will we survive? *What* will it take to survive? What will promote desirable, harmonious social progress? Dubos never really addresses these questions, which, perhaps, is what makes his work so innocently likeable.

The Mystique of an Adjective

Reuben Fine: ***A History of Psychoanalysis;*** Columbia University Press; New York.

Is Professor Sigmund Freud (that is, his memory and legacy) more famous or more controversial? He certainly changed man's knowledge (and opinion) of himself. During this century his name has dotted the pages of print with a frequency comparable only to such names as Homer, Dante and Shakespeare (in literature) or Moses, Christ and Mohammed (in a much larger dimension). People of diverse persuasions who instinctively dislike him and his teachings credit him, together with Karl Marx, with the degeneration of Western civilization. Spiritualists loathe him for reducing the soul to physiological impulses. Materialists despise him for promoting the dream to a determining factor of humanness. Collectivists hate him for proving that man is not a social artifact but a marvel of individuality. Fideists see him as the assassin of the transcendental measurement of person and fate. Traditionalists will never pardon him for his sinful romance with experimentation and change. He became a quintessential object of worship for the fanatics of liberalism and radical humanitarians (as oxymoronic as such denominations may sound).

However, recent research has brought forth new controversy over Dr. Freud's image and convictions, from which he may emerge as an unexpected supporter of truths and values which we may be forced to call—of all things—quite conservative. A cool, sober and thorough examination of these new aspects, Professor Fine's exhaustive study castigates the post-Freudian theorists of "primal scream" therapy as "vulgarians." He stresses Freud's allegiance to moral philosophy as a *conditio sine qua non* of all psychoanalytical research and reminds us that, after all, Freud believed in normalcy as an establishable notion, often repeating that "the normal person is the one who can love and work, and go on from there . . ." □

Perplexity

Joseph Alsop: ***FDR: A Centenary Remembrance;*** The Viking Press; New York.

To some, Roosevelt was the one who annihilated the ethic of capitalism. To others, he was the savior of capitalism's mechanism and structure. To many, he was the inspired, inebriating leader who led the nation into its most glorious war. To almost as many, he was an insensitive, even malicious, foreign-policy bungler whose naiveté, or sloppiness, gave us the global mess we are in right now. To a multitude of Americans, he was a charismatic guardian angel, a romantic prophet who extricated them from one of the most ominous socioeconomic debacles in history. To perhaps as many, he was a shifty social schemer who unraveled the very fabric of the time-honored American system of economic principles. Yet a man who could combine so many extreme contradictions into one dynamic personality and influence the politics of the most powerful country on earth to an almost unmatched degree—such a man could not be devoid of some greatness.

That's exactly what Joseph Alsop, a noted publicist and Washington insider (and a Roosevelt admirer), tries to show in a volume filled with fabulously nostalgic photography. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

O, What a Lovely Theory!

In the *New York Review of Books,* which is trying to become a textbook of liberal revisionism, Mr. Felix Rohatyn, a humanitarian financier, once again expounds the New Liberal Message—how to be thrifty *and* generous, practical *and* decent, fair to the poor *and* pragmatic, in favor of healthy profitability *and* for distributive ethics. Among other suggestions about how to make New York City the garden of all liberal delights, he states with authority:

> In addition, making the city's expense budget go further will require New Yorkers to behave better. The fact that the city is filthy is not just the fault of the Sanitation Department; it is also the fault of those many New Yorkers who make it filthy. The fact that traffic is appalling is not just the fault of the Police Department. It is also due to the fact that many New Yorkers do not seem able to read 'No Parking' signs or to distinguish red from green. Vandalism on the subways and buses, broken fire hydrants, filthy streets: these are not simply the result of poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment. They are the result of a breakdown in civility, and civility to a great degree is a community responsibility. Those who should be concerned about it include the political leaders, the churches, the press, and television.

Characteristically, Mr. Rohatyn does not mention schoolteachers. Civility must be taught, and that is perhaps best done in the public schools. But in order to do that, the whole contemporary concept of education must be revised, *n'est ce pas?* Fewer classes on how to achieve an orgasm or how to participate in a just revolution, and more on how to behave *not* in tune with situational ethics. Is reform in that direction possible? What would the conscience-stricken editors of all the opinion-making mags with "New York" in their title say to that suggestion? Not to mention the *Village Voice,* the confessor of the deviant, for whom misbehavior is New York City's ark of the covenant?

The Unattainability of Freedom

A *Time* magazine film reviewer, one Richard Corliss, elaborates on a homosexual German movie entitled *Taxi zum Klo,* which translates as *Taxi to the John* (rest room, men's room, etc.):

> The film, made in 16-mm for about $50,000, is handsomely photographed and

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> edited with precision. Frank Ripploh [the director] is not simply a gay exhibitionist; he is a film maker of promise and achievement, and *Taxi* is a big step toward liberating the screen.

According to Mr. Ripploh, the artist, the movie portrays "20 seconds [of] direct body sex." For the other 90 minutes the screen is filled with indirect, frontal presentations of homosexual desires, worship and various methods for culling bliss from *in*direct engagement of bodies—technically speaking. This is what *Time's* intellectual calls "a big step toward liberating the screen." What other and bigger steps does he envision, or nurse in his tender dreams, that may liberate us further?

Sex and the Broken Heart

Dr. Rollo May, an "internationally known psychotherapist" who "discusses a number of issues relating to the human heart in his most recent book, *Freedom & Destiny,*" advises women on "How to Mend a Broken Heart" in an interview under that title in the February *Harper's Bazaar,* a modern magazine for women:

> Indiscriminate sex can be healthy and constructive by protecting us from plunging into another 'serious' union too quickly.

In history and literature, this kind of advice has usually been heard from pimps. They know that if their words are heeded, such counsel will render a woman's broken heart and destiny *un*mendable. Or at least once and forever unfit for any serious union. Which, in turn, quickly disposes of her freedom, making her, in effect, a slave to perpetual whoring. We may presume that Dr. Rollo May's *oeuvre* will be an instant hit on West 42nd Street in New York City and required reading by massage-parlor operatives all around the country.

Educative Profession

Village Voice—an organ which is totally reliable in matters of cultural analysis—describes Ms. Betty Dodson as "that world famous clitoris coach." In a lengthy information piece, Ms. Dodson's methods and social usefulness are elaborated on in a general tone of warm approval; her educational institution is called a "workshop." Ms. Dodson teaches humans of both genders how to masturbate. She has already edified up to 5000 women in this subtle skill, or vocation, or art, and now she is spreading her missionary work among men. "I work with 12 to 15 men in a class. They are all naked and so am I. I share my orgasm with them. I decided over a decade ago to put my . . . where my mouth is."

We feel confused. What actually bothers us is what has happened to our language, to its interconnection with well-established notions. We have a faint memory that not so long ago there were other words used to denote *this* kind of tutoring and the schooling sites where it took place.

Virginity

Under the above title, the *Chicago Tribune* explores that subtle, touchy, tender subject with delicateness, erudition and intelligence:

> Almost all religions celebrate and have venerated virgins—such as the Egyptian goddess Isis—and this preoccupation is just one of the ways most religions have attempted to exercise control over sexual behavior in order to direct human passions toward the church.

Now we understand that elusive murmur of the heart which determined the condition of pure maidens for those 5000 years of human civilization before the coming of Masters & Johnson and the National Organization for Women. □

Social Register

'The Extramarital Affair,' a lecture by Fred Gustafson, will be presented from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday in Room 228, classroom building I, Rock Valley College.

We did not think it could be taught. Either it comes naturally (and is called adultery), or it just does not occur (and is called decency). But a skill? □

In the Mail

***The Christian Personalism of John Paul II* by Ronald D. Lawler, O.F.M., Cap., Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago.** An examination of the roots of the Pope's personal faith in Jesus Christ.

***The Pastoral Vision of John Paul II* edited by Joan Bland, SND de N.; Franciscan Herald Press; Chicago.** A presentation of the Pope's teachings about the more concrete aspects of contemporary life and a description of their impact.

***Tappan on Survival* by Mel Tappan; Janus Press; Rogue River, Oregon.** A valuable source of information for anyone desiring to learn survival skills, including such subjects as food storage, strategy, weapons, communications, survival checklist and survival library.

***Stability and Flexibility: An Analysis of Natural Systems* by Norman D. Cook; Pergamon Press; New York.** An examination of several systems within the wider framework of their implications for a philosophy of nature.

***William Temple: An Archbishop for All Seasons* by Charles W. Lowery; University Press of America; Washington, D.C.** A biography of the late Archbishop of York and Canterbury.

"Three Myths" The Heritage Lectures No. 7 by Arnold Beichman, Antonio Martino and Kenneth Minogue; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. A look at three prevalent myths: those of American fascism, of social justice and of social conditioning.

"A Heritage Roundtable: U.S. Options in Poland" The Heritage Lectures No. 9 by Richard V. Allen, Michael Ledeen, Leopold Labedz and Helmut Sonnenfeldt; The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C. An analysis of possible U.S. responses to the Polish crisis.

***The Annual Insider 1981: An Index to Public Policy;* The Heritage Foundation; Washington, D.C.** An annotated list of conservative publications and articles published in 1981.

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Critical Follies

Atlantic City; **Written by John Guare; Directed by Louis Malle; Paramount Pictures.**

Victor/Victoria; **Written and directed by Blake Edwards; MGM/United Artists.**

by Eric Shapearo

Once again, a foreigner performs magic—a proud tradition since de Toqueville, perhaps even before that—by putting his finger on that enigmatic button which releases some elusive truths about America, truths that are unbeknownst to natives. This is a movie about the endemic American interplay of frustrations and unfulfilled wishes, however shoddy, about the humiliation of defeats and the bitterness of decay; but it is also about that unique American existential vibrancy which evades all vicissitudes of individual fates. It is also about the giddy, even absurd, American transiency of values, substances, images —which, elsewhere, must last for centuries and aggregate into traditions, but in America serve merely a fleeting historical moment, only to be quickly transformed into either a new bonanza or a ghost town by a process so natural that it is almost invisible to Americans. Louis Malle, a French director, has crystallized a gem of a movie from these contents. In focus is Atlantic City—once a synonym for a very special glamor, for decades a symbol of middle-class leisure and luxury, a den of not-too-vicious vices for the Prohibition-era East Coast—the paradigm of a style that merged nouveau-riche opulence with the social arrivism of a nation en route to extraordinary power. But over the last few decades, the landscape of *this* city has acquired an uncanny ability to shift from that early luxury to a decrepitude of both buildings and human existences; now seediness touches everything in sight; there are memories of wasted aspirations and once-imposing hotel lobbies. From such ingredients Malle has fashioned—surprisingly—a not-depressing tale: somehow, somewhere, the American sense of fulfillment seems to hover in the air, and pneumatic drills pump hope into an environment of desolation. Although mentioned as a contender, Mr. Malle did not win an Academy Award for his movie. He lost to an ideological operator of facile pseudo-historical pictures, falsified notions and phony moods.

* * *

Victor/Victoria is crummy, inept, unfunny—actually boring. And what is worse—it is about as sexually intriguing as postprandial heartburn. In a movie which wants to use tangled, if primitive, sexual tensions as a departure point for slapstick comedy, this is the kiss of death. Yet one of those clowns who are called

"critics" in New York wrote of *Victor/Victoria* that it is "one of the funniest flat-out farces ever put on film."

Another compared it to *Some Like It Hot,* which only proves that he has the brain of a eunuch. The sensuality in Billy Wilder's miniclassic was electrifying because of its subtlety, its half-tones and innuendoes, all of which apparently were not detected by the eunuchoidal eye and ear of said "critic." Blake Edwards, *Victor/Victoria's* director, is one of the most unimaginative filmmakers around; he is the "author" of the *Pink Panther* series, a purveyor of a cheapness that is hailed by "critics" as craftsmanship. His success is based entirely on the poor taste, vulgarity and obscurantism of his audience—not an uncommon phenomenon in any epoch, one on which many a fortune has been made. Yet, when his hero/heroine, a woman who pretends to be a male female-impersonator in Paris during the 1930's, begins to talk to a man (who wants her as a woman, and after whom she quite healthily lusts) in the jargon of a Manhattan sex therapist in order to convey a stale feminist message, the farce becomes an exercise in imbecility. Anyone who has ever read a libertine novel, or seen a depravity play, of that period can't help but be disgusted by the director's and scriptwriter's wooden heavyhandedness and obtuseness. I don't care if, in a film, men lust after women disguised as men or vice versa, so long as it is a movie about disoriented lusting as a propellant for merriment. Lusting should be lusting, not drooling. What Mr. Edwards offers is a version of a sexual quid pro quo which, sadly, reminds me of a horrifying sequence from an old Italian documentary about turtles on some Pacific island whose sense of direction had been altered by atomic tests. Instead of proceeding to the ocean, they collectively wandered toward the scorched inland to certain death.

The "critics" who call such a parody of farce a *masterpiece* apparently have only heard of Buster Keaton, but have never seen him. If they had, they would know that slapstick does not "relate" to the temporary, only to the timeless. □

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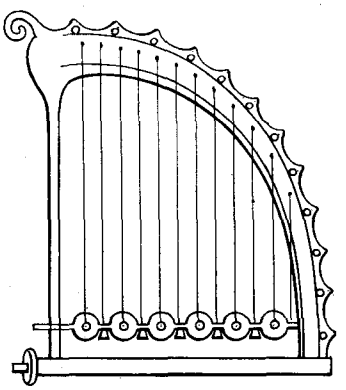
Records: Tuneful Affairs

by Robert R. Reilly

An attractive disc of chamber music by the Western Arts Trio has been issued by Laurel Records (LR-109), Volume III in a series featuring this fine ensemble. The first piece is Joaquin Turina's Second Trio, Opus 74 in B minor for piano and strings. The beginning is reminiscent of Anton Arensky's Trio, a late 19th-century Russian work. The second movement is quite Ravelish with occasional splashes of Spanish sounds. It is an enjoyable, tuneful affair, an attractive mélange of Russian, Spanish and French influences. Completing side one is a short (8:45) trio by Alexandre Tcherepnin composed in 1925. For all its brevity, it carries even more weight than the Turina piece—taut, propulsive and darkly shaded, much like something from Shostakovitch. In my book, this is high praise. (Anyone who finds this music appealing should also investigate Tcherepnin's Symphony No. 2 on Louisville Records, LS-645.)

Side two contains some rather somber music by Aaron Copland and Marcelle de Manziarly. "'Vitebsk,' Study on a Jewish Theme" (1929) is no down-home, foot-stomping Copland, nor is it a Bloch-like rhapsody. It is a more abstract affair in which Copland experiments with the out-of-tune sound of quarter-tones. It gains a good deal of its expressiveness from the Jewish idioms it employs, but one who is unfamiliar with them can listen with but one ear. This is harsh, clangorous, passionate music that does not easily yield its beauties.

Miss Manziarly wrote her "Trilogue" especially for the Western Arts Trio. The work is "a 'dialogue' between the violin, cello and piano during which the different characteristics of sound and technique of each instrument reveals the contrast between their respective manners of



expression." I am not sure what these instruments are saying to each other, but it is decidedly not on the cheery side.

Laurel's new "Quiex" vinyl seems to be working superbly. The surfaces are very quiet and the recording very good. On a new London digital recording, LDR-71021, Sir Charles Mackerras leads the Vienna Philharmonic in a by-now-traditional pairing of Leos Janacek's Sinfonietta with Taras Bulba. The September /October 1981 *Chronicles of Culture* announced the happy news that Karl Ancerl's old Turnabout performance had been reissued by Quintessence. That blazing version is worth having, no matter what sound improvements the future may bring. I am also fond of Kubelik's DGG performance of ten years ago. To begin, the quality of the new London pressing is excellent. Now that Polygram is running London, we are assured of the same faultless standards of DGG and Phillips. For years the old London records were plagued with incessant pops and tics. This recording removes any skepticism about the magnitude of improvement that a digital recording can provide. The detail, the clarity, the impact are thrilling, and one can hardly imagine music that would benefit more from these advantages. The first impression of Mackerras's performance of the Sinfonietta is that his tempi seem too slow, that he is missing some of the glorious tumult of the music. But, by the last movement, any impression of flaccidity has been swept away by his expansive treatment. Mackerras's approach to Taras Bulba may be the most rhapsodic yet. This is magnificent, soaring music-making. For anyone who already loves this music, this disc is a must. Anyone who awaits introduction to these exultant, powerful, bewitching masterpieces of the 20th century should not hesitate.

Virgil Thomson has made a symphony, his third (1972), out of an earlier String Quartet, No. 2, vintage 1932. The child is the father of the man and, since the String Quartet No. 2 is a neoclassic charmer, it is no surprise that the full-grown Symphony No. 3 is delightful as well. The music is extroverted and does not betray its chamber-music origins, although Thomson's bold, exuberant orchestration pushes the music almost too far into the open. It is a short work consisting of four movements, each written in one of the classical forms: sonata-allegro, waltzer (waltz), adagio (based on the tango) and rondo-sonata finale. As it abounds in dance rhythms and lovely melodies, its appeal is immediate. The opening statement of the cyclical theme is both startling and catchy. The mood is celebratory, almost circuslike at times; it slowly winds down to the elegiac third movement, picks up energy for the thematic recapitulations of the fourth and closes serenely. This is no *Sturm und Drang* grappling with a Doppelgänger, nor is it music for the ages, but it is a piece to which one can return often for sheer enjoyment and relief from the sonic (and other) displacements of the modern world. Sound, surface and performance are all fine on this welcome Composers Recording (CRI-SD-411). (The quartet version is also recommended and is available in a worthy Vot Box of American String Quartets SV-BX-5305.)

The flip side of the Thomson disc contains a reissue of a Columbia recording of Robert Helps's Symphony No. 1

Mr. Reilly is with the International Communication Agency in Washington, D.C.

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(1955). This work is written in a much more modern idiom than the Thomson. It is not inaccessible, but its complexity makes it quite difficult to approach. According to the composer's notes, the first movement is "a rather explosive short sonata-form movement," the second (which, separately, in the form of Adagio for Orchestra, received the Fromm Foundation Award and a Leopold Stokowski performance) is "pervasively somber" and, while "the most tonally oriented," is the "most complex," and the last is "generally fast and energetic, vacillating between 6/8 and 3/4, with the often bizarrely dancelike 3/4 winning out in the end." To which one can add only that the ending is not quite so sprightly as that commentary suggests. Helps is definitely making music here, albeit of a thorny kind, and there is a serious intelligence operating, but beyond that it is difficult to get hold of this work on short acquaintance. □

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

Prime-Time Theology

by Philip F. Lawler

Quiet! The Fonz is speaking.

You know The Fonz, of course. Star of *Happy Days,* idol of preteen millions, the man who sparked the adolescent urge to thrust both thumbs outward and bray, "Aaaay!" But on this occasion The Fonz is "the pipe"—the character who speaks the mind of the show's producers. Right now The Fonz is confronting a Moral Crisis and dispensing the folk theology of TV ethics.

Background: The Fonz (who, as you know, is irresistible to women) has just learned that his latest flame is married. She assures him that the husband is no problem; they have an "understanding" arrangement between them. But The Fonz will have none of it. "Look," he says in no uncertain tones, "I'm not going to judge you. I'm not going to tell you how to live your life. But personally, for me, right now, adultery is uncool." The would-be Jezebel recoils, rebuked; The Fonz marches off resolutely. The camera fades. The audience applauds. Righteousness has triumphed again.

Now understand this. Fonz is not just a greasy mechanic from the Milwaukee 60's. Like every other sitcom hero, Fonz is Everyman, learning a weekly moral lesson at the hands of the scriptwriters. With each lesson comes a convenient moral nugget, an Aesopian ending. Right after that annoying set of penultimate commercials, the "pipe" weighs in with a short homily, summing up the ethical harvest from the half-hour's frolics. Mork calls Orson to dispense a tidbit of pop ethics. The moral of the story is . . .

Next time you sit through a sitcom, listen carefully to the moral pitch. Invariably it fulfills certain requirements. It is heartwarming. It offends no one. Phrases like "let's talk about it" and "we can work it out" dominate. The hero is sadder but wiser, better attuned to the moral complexities of his silly life. And everyone in the audience—*everyone*—can swallow the moral pill without a grimace. Unless, of course, the audience is looking for something stronger than platitudes. But of course a sitcom audience is not looking for stern moral lectures. Fonzie's sermonettes are digestible, but real religion should never rear its ugly head. Nor does it, really. Clergymen are sanitized; no denominational prejudices obtrude. The padre on *M*A*S*H* is cuddly and bungling. When the space-headed daughter on *Eight is Enough* decides to study Judaism, the rabbi she consults (who, conveniently, is young and handsome) dishes out a sort of inoffensive pabulum which no one, from Billy Graham to Anwar Sadat, could dispute. On *Three's Company,* Chrissy's father is a minister, but he, too, refrains from moral instruction.

Inevitably, a more traditional religious figure will, now and then, wander onto the sitcom stage, where he promptly becomes the butt of the moral lesson. A stern, button-down preacher, the image of Cotton Mather, is shown to be a hypocrite when his secret vices are revealed. Archie Bunker, the paragon of blue-collar intemperance, is confounded by the innocent wisdom around him. Rigid religious beliefs—the sort that cannot be subsumed into the pluralistic mold—are shackles which the sitcom hero must break down.

Nor are religious prejudices the only victims of this methodology. Show after pious show, the TV moguls attack received wisdom and preach the new social order. Erik Estrada laces *CHiPS* with calls

Mr. Lawler is managing editor of Policy Review.

In the Mail

"Christianity and Democracy" by Richard John Neuhaus; The Institute on Religion and Democracy; Washington, D.C. A position paper on the Christian Church and its relationship to various political systems.

"Moral Implications of Energy" by William G. Pollard, Frederick S. Carney and Thomas J. Reese, S.J.; Ethics and Public Policy Center; Washington, D.C. An examination of the ethical considerations of nuclear power from the viewpoints of both scientists and the clergy.

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for racial harmony; *Soap* counsels tolerance for homosexuals; even Fonzie's own *Happy Days* takes on a new social consciousness. With Norman Lear in the lead, the sitcoms battle against every conventional belief in sight.

Since parents all too often teach conventional beliefs to their children, it follows that the sitcoms must liberate the children from these pernicious influences. Father doesn't know best anymore. Sitcom kids work out problems on their own, occasionally pausing to offer good advice to their elders. When the understanding older sister on *Eight is Enough* realizes that her 16-year-old sister is about to lose her virginity, she looks on anxiously but holds her peace. Authority figures should be seen and not heard. And of course little sister reaches a satisfactory conclusion on her own, uninhibited by prior principles. Acting *in loco parentis,* the scriptwriters find some other reason to encourage continence; moral rules are not enough, so the threat of venereal disease and the fear of emotional commitment serve instead. And the parents, proper sitcom ideals, never speak a discouraging word.

The assault on convention does not end with the last homily of the comedy block. As TV fare turns to cops and robbers and other "adult" intrigues, the pace steps up. Calls for understanding come thick and fast; moral principles are seldom cited. TV surgeons discover that an East German athlete is the product of a sex-change operation, but still they urge her boyfriend not to abandon her—he should be *understanding.* A middle-aged man conducts his first adulterous affair without guilt, since his wife welcomes him back *understandingly.* A tough cop roughs up some prisoners, but his superiors *understand* that he is just overanxious to nab his man. Situational ethics reign supreme. If a character means well—if he honestly believes that he is doing right—the script treats his faults kindly.

Moral tenets apparently do not fit into the tough world of the teledrama. Maybe the tough cop doesn't play by the rules, but how can he? The rules are outmoded; they don't take account of the complexities with which he has to contend. The TV world is too complicated, too subtly shaded, for ordinary ethical principles. Characters cannot fall back on general moral principles or refer to dogma for support. This is rugged, gritty realism, and even good guys sometimes wear black hats.

One distinct TV genre stands out as an exception, allowing its characters to base their actions on traditional moral beliefs —and even to go to church. Religious services and religious principles figure prominently in both *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie.* But these shows are set in the past, safely insulated from today's realities. The implication is clear. The Walton family can afford to live by such unyielding principles, sheltered as they are in their quaint Appalachian town, but today, in the big city, we need flexible ethical systems. So today's teledramas must be realistic.

Realism, yes. So, time and again, we confront that hackneyed dramatic type, the whore with a heart of gold. Realism? Then why is it, amid all these stark realities, that we never confront a whore with the heart of a whore? □

JOURNALISM

Neofeudalism

Anyone who is familiar with history, particularly with that of the European Middle Ages, knows that the supreme struggle of that time was the protracted war for undivided authority. In order to prosper as a state or a society, it was necessary to establish and make functional a central political power. The ones who fiercely opposed that power were mighty overlords who invoked some inalienable rights grounded in an aristocratic feudal ethos and personal merit. The common perception was that the feudal sovereigns oppressed people and defended only their own vassals, while the central authority took on the cause of the little folk, the peasants, the wretched of the earth. Thus, not until the oppressive overlords had been crushed by kings, popes and the logic of history, could societies go forward with the business of progress.

In our time, i.e. in America, we are witnessing a replay of that struggle. The central authority, however, is not a monarch, or even a member of the duly elected federal government, but the American idea of democratic fairness and discursive pluralism, which is being fatally challenged by those who attempt autocratically to monopolize the public discourse, thus transforming it into a tool of their self-perpetuating and unassailable power. Americanism asserts that everyone has the civil right to voice his point of view publicly. The overlords of the media and the press oppose and factually destroy that right, claiming some inalienable privilege that gives them—and them alone—the uncontrolled-by-society power to determine *who* speaks out, *how* and about *what.* Recently the legally elected U.S. administration felt that its views and its record had been grossly misrepresented and falsified by a CBS program and asked for air time from CBS to present publicly its point of view. CBS, the Duke of Burgundy of USA 1980, refused. Both the good of the society and the elemental principle of democratic decency were trampled by that neofeudal spirit, the curse of our republic.

In the Middle Ages, however, the con-

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tention was basically moral, conceptual, conditioned by a profound faith in each side's argument. Often, it was referred to as a tragic and insoluble clash between honorable men who differed so extremely that blood must flow. Nothing could be further from the neofeudalism of today's media. They are in a triple conflict: with the government which was mandated by the people, with the people themselves and with the sense of integrity as it is seen by almost everybody in this country. They are perceived as schemers, hustlers, exploiters and liars whose only rationale and morality is the accumulation of power and wealth. Sooner or later, there will be a President who can break their grip over our reality. The more radically and drastically he will do that, the louder will be the cheer all over this land. □

Parade

Parade is a Sunday supplement to dailies all over the country. One of its main attractions is a slimy gossip column signed by someone who calls himself "Walter Scott"—which sounds like a grim joke. In this section letter-writers sometimes ask sensible questions, only to receive a reprehensibly stupid answer:

> Q. Why hasn't Jane Fonda been brought to trial and condemned as a traitor for her actions in Hanoi during the Vietnam war?
>
> A. The U.S. never legally declared war against North Vietnam, and Fonda could never be technically charged with treason. She was, however, bitterly condemned at the height of the Vietnam war for visiting Hanoi and broadcasting for the North Vietnamese. But she was not alone in visiting Hanoi during that period. Fonda is a woman of principle and integrity, and she was determined to learn the truth about the war, much of which was being withheld from the American public.

So we now have Fonda and her communist fellow traveler's mentality, which "Walter Scott" pushes as "principle and integrity." Someday a true revolution may erupt in America—a rebellion against the despotic tyranny of the American tabloid mentality which arrogates to itself the right to say *anything* with impunity, without being held accountable to any standard of truth or decency. We hope there will be enough trees for every "Walter Scott" of this land. □

Nice Ladies

Dear Abby and Ann Landers are twin sisters, nee Friedman, who have built a formidable business of media-manufactured, chintzy warm-heartedness and compassion. They proclaim tender love for one another. However, this is what Friedman/Van Buren has to say about Friedman/Landers:

> In Eau Claire she had a little tiny place while I lived in a lovely home with loads of help. Her husband worked for mine. I drove a luxury car; she drove a lower-priced model . . . If she looked old, if she needed a face lift, believe me, it's because she needed it. I'm quite opposed to chopping myself up, but it was her right. Why not? When you cry a lot, it's got to show.

How compassionate, considerate, subtle, what an inspiration for confidence in Ms. Van Buren's charity, humanness and kindness. □

Erudition

From "Book World," the highbrow section of that fount of intellectual erudition, the *Chicago Tribune,* comes some information about a novel:

> This ambitious and lengthy novel recounts the history, through the time of the Nazis and its aftermath, of the fictional province of Masuria . . .

Well, we believe that the *Chicago Tribune* has the power to change the world, but we must point out that any map of Eastern Europe would prove that its editors are ignoramuses. Masuria exists—and has existed for over 1000 years, in the same place and under the same name. □

The American Proscenium

Duck Soup

Remember the war in Fredonia? The Falkland Islands crisis has something in common with it. In the movie, the Marx Brothers made war, but they were infinitely surprised that shooting is inseparable from war, that heads may be blown away and corpses may pile up. Both the Argentines and British began launching torpedoes at one another's ships and were then appalled that people died as a result of such an enterprise. We're afraid that this new approach to warfare originated in the Israeli effort to make wars without casualties. Israel, at least, has good reasons for this kind of worry: her entire population is less abundant than an average army corps of any one of her numerous enemies. But Britain—one of the world's powers—should know something about the price of rescuing the disintegration of Britishness. We, too, should learn something from the affair. □

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